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YOGA SADHANA PANORAMA



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Satsangs and discourses in Mumbai 2004,
Mallorca 2004, Australia 2004 and 2005,
Colombia 2005 & Greece 2005*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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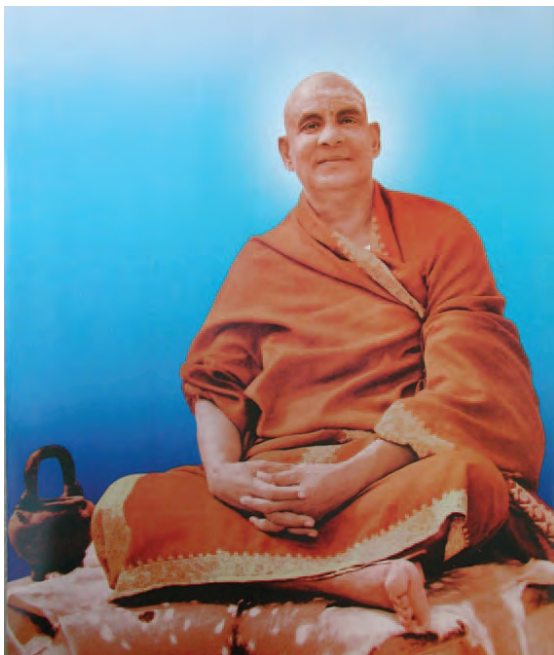
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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Mumbai, India

2004

Holistic Yoga

J. J. School of Arts, 23–26 February



Evolution of Consciousness and Energy

In tantra, there is an image of Shiva and Shakti united as one. The union between Shiva and Shakti is visualized in the form of *ardhanarishwara*, a half-male and half-female figure. The concept of yoga begins and develops from this symbol of oneness. How can the supreme consciousness be represented by a half-male, half-female form? The supreme being, whom we call God, has no gender, it is neither male nor female; it is a state of being in which only wisdom exists. The foundation of that wisdom is *sat*, truth; the expression of that wisdom is *chit*, consciousness; and the fulfilment of that wisdom is *ananda*, bliss – sat-chit-ananda. It is with this idea that tantra begins its quest to understand the transcendental, divine nature and the nature of the manifest, material creation.

The union between Shiva and Shakti represents the ultimate state of existence, in the sense that there is no division, distinction or duality. There is harmony and integration of all the forces that are opposites in nature. When all these forces are unified and at peace, that is the state of Godhood. It is also stated in the *Bhagavad Gita* that just as all rivers merge into the ocean, lose their identity and become the ocean, in the same manner, when all the opposite, dualistic forces lose their power and merge in harmony, a state of peace evolves. This peace represents the divine nature, and it is the ultimate quality we wish to experience.

Separation of Shiva and Shakti

Let us begin our journey from the transcendental state to the present state. In the state of absolute equilibrium and unity, where there is absolute wisdom, absolute truth and the absolute bliss that comes with the realization of truth, there is a movement. It is stated in the tantras and in the vedic literature that in this state of absoluteness, one desire arose: *Ekoham bahusyam* – ‘I am one, let me become many’. The first *spandan* or vibration, the first transformation, takes place. This movement separates Shiva from Shakti.

From our perspective, when there is understanding and knowledge, at one point in time it will give birth to a desire. A desire will never manifest in the absence of understanding or knowledge. If you want to buy a new car, for example, before the creation of that desire, you need to have some knowledge and understanding of cars. This knowledge triggers a process within the mind which is recognized as desire. Desire does not come alone; it is always accompanied by its companion, which is action. Without action, it cannot be a desire; it is only an idea, a thought, but when the thought is accompanied by action, it becomes a desire, *iccha*.

Just imagine what happens when a stone is dropped into an absolutely peaceful, still lake. When vibration occurs, ripples are created from that point. These ripples, which begin from the centre and extend outwards, become the catalysts to alter the harmonious state of the water. Just as a stone becomes the catalyst to alter the state of the water, a desire becomes the catalyst to alter the nature of absolute knowledge; it is a ripple. This first manifestation of the greater mind is known as *iccha shakti*, the force of desire. *Jnana shakti* is the force of absolute knowledge. As the desire begins to externalize itself, it is described as being *kriya shakti*, the power of creative action. Action becomes part of the desire, leading to externalization of the idea.

In this state of absoluteness, when I realize that I am the potential, the energy and the source, I now have to express that potential. The expression of that quality or strength is the natural outcome of knowledge. This natural outcome of

knowledge creates distinction and division. It has been stated in the *Ishavasya Upanishad* that knowledge definitely leads one to understand the mysteries of life and creation, but at the same time it can lead one to greater darkness. This is a very interesting concept. Knowledge is life, a force, energy, strength and experience. It can take one towards light and it can also take one towards darkness. We have all experienced that in our lives. Despite knowing what is right, we do the wrong thing. Why? We can justify that action by saying we are compelled by circumstances and society's expectations and desires, but it does not matter how we justify our actions, ideas and thoughts. Our understanding and knowledge lead to expression, which can lead us towards enlightenment or towards bondage. It is neither right nor wrong, because it is dependent on the quality we experience in life, whether it is the tamasic, rajasic or sattwic nature.

In this state of absoluteness, when the first type of desire arises, then separation and differentiation occur, and absolute knowledge is divided into two. The shakti aspect, *asat*, unreality, *maya*, illusion, becomes active and the shiva aspect, *sat*, absoluteness, remains static. This concept of Sat and Asat, Shiva and Shakti, Brahman and Maya, Purusha and Prakriti is the foundation of the Indian philosophical systems. In the absolute, Shiva and Shakti are one, but because of the desire there is a division and differentiation between the real and the unreal, and we distinguish Shakti from Shiva, Maya from Brahman, Prakriti from Purusha, Asat from Sat. Shakti now becomes responsible for our continuous journey alone.

Desire and the gunas

When Shakti is fully separated from Shiva, it undergoes transformations and becomes involved with the qualities of tamas, rajas and sattwa. Separation of Shakti happens due to desire and, therefore, the tamasic, rajasic and sattwic natures are also influenced by desires. The moment we become desireless, tamas, rajas and sattwa do not exist, and we again become the absolute self. As soon as desire arises, the expressions of rajas, tamas and sattwa also commence. The

only difference is that sattwic desire uplifts a being. Tamasic desires take one away from the self, from the state of peace and happiness, whereas sattwic desires infuse peace and happiness into life. Rajas is a danger zone, which balances both the tamasic and sattwic natures.

This is the idea contained in the tantras. The moment Shakti, the transcendental force, is imbued with the qualities of sattwa, rajas or tamas, it is identified as a separate self from the transcendental. The moment rajas, tamas and sattwa exist, the vision of the absolute, transcendental nature is gone. Once that absolute nature is attained, all three attributes cease to exist. This is the reality of our life. We experience and perceive that reality, but according to our own mentality, lifestyle and evolution.

Birth of the tattwas

Once the three natures arise as the force or creative aspect of Shakti, other transformations occur in the nature of the Shakti concept. With the birth of the three natures, consolidation of an experience takes place. Consolidation of those experiences and events is identified as the birth of the *tattwas*, the elements. Space is the first element identified in the Upanishads. It is said that space is the ever-expanding consciousness, *Kham Brahman*. *Kham* means 'space' and *Brahman* means the 'ever-expanding consciousness'. This is embryonic development, the first level of individual development, where the potential of consciousness is again perceived.

The next stage is unhampered movement in space, and its symbol is air. The dynamism and activity of consciousness is symbolized by the fire element. Then, the content of consciousness is the result of the development of the sattwic, rajasic and tamasic natures. All are hidden, unknown to human beings, yet they are the foundation of our personality. From these, everything takes birth, and is identified as the water element. Birth takes place in water. In the philosophical traditions water symbolizes life. Water symbolizes the content of consciousness from which birth has taken place and life has

emerged as the individual nature. Stability, the experience of life and existence is then seen in the earth element.

At the microcosmic level: chakras and kundalini

This development in the realm of Shakti is perceived at the microcosmic level, the body, in the form of chakras and kundalini. Let us look at the components of kundalini yoga. Sahasrara, the topmost centre at the crown of the head, is the seat of the transcendental self where Shiva and Shakti unite and are united. The birth of an idea, a thought, a desire and the first separation between the two forces in kundalini yoga is perceived in ajna chakra. Ajna chakra is where the split between the forces can take place and where the forces can be united. In kundalini yoga, the symbol of the nadis is ida, pingala and sushumna. In the lower chakras, ida, pingala and sushumna are separate, but when they unite in ajna, they become one and flow as one nadi to sahasrara. Ajna becomes the doorway between the absolute, transcendental, divine dimension and the phenomenal, created, manifest dimension.

After the birth of that first desire comes separation. The space element is perceived in vishuddhi chakra, the air element is represented in anahata chakra, the fire element in manipura chakra, the water element in swadhisthana chakra, and the earth element in mooladhara chakra. The experience of these various chakras or dimensions in the realms of energy and consciousness is known as maya. Maya is an expression of the individual mind or consciousness.

Bondage at microcosmic and macrocosmic levels

Now, at the microcosmic level, our level, we are subject to maya, which means that something is controlling us, either as destiny or fate, *prarabdha*. But at the macrocosmic level, the transcendental level, maya is the creation of the individual mind, where one feels bound without realizing that one is free. It is like the camel that was tied up with an imaginary rope one night, instead of a real rope, and in the morning would not move until the camel driver went through the

motions of untying the imaginary rope. The camel was in the habit of being tied up at night and untied in the morning. It is a habit or a nature that is expressing itself in a particular process or action. That is the performance of maya, shakti, prakriti. We think that we are controlled by God, and God thinks that we have created the bondage ourselves. We say, “God, free me!” God says, “Why don’t people realize they are free.”

Desire and the level of mooladhara

The various dimensions of consciousness and energy at each level of the chakras represent a conditioning of consciousness. In this process of manifestation, Prakriti, or Maya, or Shakti has conditioned itself because of desires. It can decondition itself by overcoming desires. Desire is what makes our life tick. If we had no desire, we would be physically, mentally and spiritually inert. But we are alive because of desire, we suffer because of desire and we become happy because of desire. We live, work and interact because of desire. We function under the influence of desire. Desire is the force and the expression of Shakti in the manifest dimension. We came to yoga because of desire and we need yoga because of desire. So here we come down to the level of mooladhara, and that is where we exist today.

Mooladhara is composed of two words: *mool*, meaning root, and *adhara*, meaning support. Mooladhara is the basis, the platform on which life expresses itself. It is a conditioned state of existence where one is under the absolute control of the desires. In the quest for happiness and fulfilment of our desires, we encounter situations which lead to confusion and conflict, illness and imbalance, distraction and dissipation. They exist as movements in the air, air currents which cannot be seen. We can feel the movement of the wind against our skin as a gentle breeze, a storm or as a peaceful state. We can experience it, but we cannot see it. In the same way, the invisible air currents that we can feel but not see are the expressions of life, which in yoga are identified as the vrittis under whose influence we live.

The nature of vrittis

Yoga has not identified the vrittis, it has only identified the nature of vrittis. The *Yoga Sutras* state that vrittis are of five kinds and has classified them into five groups: *pramana*, direct knowledge, *viparyaya*, false knowledge, *vikalpa*, imagination, *nidra*, sleep, and *smriti*, memory. Everything the vrittis do through the mind and senses is contained in these five classifications. *Pramana* is not one vritti; it is the nature of vrittis. *Vikalpa* is not one vritti; it is the nature of vrittis. *Smriti* is not one vritti; it is the nature of vrittis, because we have more than one memory.

Once a person underwent hypnosis shortly after entering a room for the first time. He was then asked various questions about the room, such as how many windows there were, how many flowerpots, how many flowers in bloom, and so on. Under hypnosis the person was able to give accurate answers to these questions without ever having counted any of the items consciously. What does this mean? If we are able to access those areas of the mind that at present are inaccessible consciously, we realize that we know everything, because one aspect of the self, one part of the mind is always the *drashta*, the witnessing mind. It is not the experience itself; it is the witness of the experience.

When the conscious mind is absent, it is possible to give accurate descriptions of what is happening because the mind is free from the vrittis. But we have our identification with the outside world, with the world of name, form and idea, in the world of time, space and object. Our focus is always uni-dimensional, not multi-dimensional. The moment we are able to remove that uni-directional awareness, we become multi-dimensional people. This idea is the beginning of the yogic process.

The vrittis, as defined in the *Yoga Sutras*, represent five compartments in which every mental state is included. Memory, for example, is not only something you have seen, recorded and lived, it is also something you have ignored, but which has been registered anyway. So *smriti* cannot be one type of memory; it will be multi-directional, multi-

dimensional experience in the form of memory, including the conscious, subconscious, unconscious and also the transcendental dimensions.

It is the same with sleep, nidra. In nidra there is absence of waking consciousness, absence of the cognitive faculty. But even when we are asleep, the subconscious remains active and unconscious processes continue to happen. We dream and we experience in the state of sleep. Therefore, do not misunderstand the word vritti. *Vritti* means a collection of experiences which disturbs the ease and harmony of the tranquil state of existence.

When we are unable to guide the vrittis properly, or use them to fulfil an aspiration, they become the cause of *kleshas*, afflictions. Our life is full of kleshas. We are always worrying about something happening to ourselves, our family or our society. Pain, suffering, confusion and conflict are afflictions. Life as we live it today is affliction. Do we continue to live that way, or do we make an attempt to improve the quality of life? Yoga aims to improve the quality of life, to change the pattern of life, so that we become aware of ourselves and our potentials, and begin to live them.

Holistic Yoga – Bahiranga Yoga

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Evolution of Consciousness and Energy

Close your eyes for a few minutes. First become aware of your body. If there is any tightness or tension in any part of the body, try to release that tension and be comfortable.

Now, we are going on a journey in front of the closed eyes. It is the space of chidakasha, the dark space, the black space which you can see in front of the closed eyes. Inside you is chidakasha, the space of the mind. Chit means inner mind, akasha means space. Visualize a current of light in the dark space of chidakasha. That self-effulgent light is Shiva and Shakti in a state of union and harmony.

Now, from that point of light see a stream of light emerge, like the theory of the big bang. That stream of light distances itself from the point of light. Yet the nature of both is luminous, it is light. The point of light is static and the stream of light is mobile. One is self-contained, the other is in motion. The still point of light is Shiva and the light in motion is Shakti moving away from that still point. As this stream of light moves further and further away from the luminous point, it becomes smaller and smaller and smaller, slower and slower and slower.

Light itself is invisible. Light can only be perceived when it encounters an object and when the object is illuminated. So in this stream of light there is a subtle fluctuation of illumination.

Suddenly the extreme point of the light flares up. It encounters invisible matter, dark matter. This is the beginning, this is the interaction, this is the birth of the gunas, of the nature, of sattwa, rajas and tamas. When these sparks come up in this ray of light, in this stream of light, then the ray becomes broad, it expands. It is not a single stream anymore, but the sparks, the gunas, change the shape of this stream of light. Once the stream of light changes and becomes bigger and brighter, the perception changes also.

The first element is recognized and identified, and it is space. Space is now perceived as an element, which becomes the container of the movement of light. As the light expands and travels in space, the motion, the friction, gives birth to another element – air. In air the movement is seen. Up to here the experience of this light, this shakti, this prakriti, is not tangible but subtle. The journey continues. At one point an object appears, matter appears, and when the light hits that matter, the matter becomes illuminated, it glows, and the third element, fire, comes into existence. That matter is fully saturated with light and friction, and light gives birth to fire. The journey continues. Condensation happens and the water element comes forth. The journey continues. Concentration of energy takes place and visible matter comes forth, the element earth.

The crown of the head is the seat of the united force, Shiva and Shakti, and the stream of light moves down from sahasrara to ajna. In the region of ajna, the psychic centre situated at the eyebrow centre, the first spandan or vibration is experienced in the form of the three gunas. The journey continues. The space element is perceived in the form of vishuddhi chakra, the pure essence. The journey continues. The air element is seen in anahata chakra. The interaction of the gunas, the interaction of the elements, the flow and the movement is perceived in the form of air.

The journey continues. The luminosity and the warmth, the dynamism and the visibility of this light is now perceived as fire in manipura chakra. From this point, the subtle becomes manifest. Consolidation of energy begins and water is realized at swadhisthana chakra. Then, at the base is mooladhara chakra,

near the perineum, at the root of the spinal cord, where this stream of light becomes matter. It solidifies and becomes the adhara, the basis, for all creation to take place. The luminosity, the light which is contained in matter and does not travel further down, is given a name – kundalini. In kundalini yoga, it is stated that kundalini is in the form of a serpent, which has the image of being in three and a half coils. These three and a half coils represent the chakra of mooladhara, the materialistic tendencies of sattwa, rajas and tamas. Now open your eyes.

Introducing holistic yoga

Our discussion on the evolution of consciousness and energy creates the foundation for holistic yoga. Until now holistic yoga has been only a word or term, but we have to develop our understanding of the concept from a much broader perspective. Holistic yoga is not only body, mind and spirit, but incorporates society and humanity as well. It is living yoga, with the aim of improving the quality of life.

If you look at Sri Krishna's statement in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:50), *Yogah karmasu kaushalam*, 'yoga is skill in action', you will understand that yoga is part of actualizing the aspirations of life. This can be done in a positive, constructive way. The effort to improve oneself is like growing a tree. When you plant a seed, you take a lot of care to ensure that it grows properly. Once the seed becomes a tree, then the shade can be enjoyed by everyone. You have to care for yourself in the same manner. When you plant a seed in yourself, you also have to protect that aspiration from negativities and frustrations, which represent the weeds that suffocate the seed's growth. You have to protect your seed from insects and animals, which are the negative tendencies in life.

We have to look at yoga in this manner now. Apart from what yoga can do for us physically, psychologically and spiritually, we have to look at the other dimension of yoga. Only then can we be true yogis. A yogi is not one who practises yoga. A yogi is a person who lives yoga, who lives that unity and harmony. That is what we need to become in today's society. Whether or not we practise asana or pranayama

is irrelevant, because ultimately it is our choice. However, behind the practices there is another aspiration, which is to improve the quality of life. It is here that we need to become the *drashta*, the witness of ourselves, not the *abhyasa karta*, or practitioner, but the one who is observing, protecting and ensuring the growth of the aspirations.

In the tradition, yoga is divided into two parts: *bahiranga* yoga and *antaranga* yoga. *Bahiranga* means external and *antaranga* means internal. *Bahiranga yoga* is the yoga to be practised and *antaranga yoga* is the yoga to be lived. We can also add a third component – transformative yoga. You can live yoga, and many people do lead sattwic, balanced and contented lives, but it does not mean that a positive self-transformation is experienced. In order to become aware, to experience positive transformations, we need to include transformative yoga. These three aspects: the yoga that is to be practised, the yoga that is to be lived and transformative yoga, are the foundation of holistic yoga.

What is the purpose of *bahiranga* yoga, external yogic sadhana? What are the components? *Bahiranga* yoga refers to the practices we can perform to purify the physical body, which is the vehicle for experiencing life. *Shariramadyam khalu dharma sadhanam* – the body is the vehicle by which one can perform and fulfil one's duties, obligations and dharmas.

Disease, health and harmony

The body has to be maintained in a state of optimum health. Optimum health does not mean having a disease-free body, because the body cannot be free from disease and illness. The seers realized and stated that in creation everything which is subject to birth goes through transformation: *janma*, birth, *vyadhi*, illness, *jara*, ageing, and *mrityu*, death. This is the natural law which cannot be changed. Optimum health is maintaining the harmony of the *pranas* whatever the state of the body may be. Maintaining balance of the *pranas* has become the foundation stone for yogic management principles.

People suffer from physical illness, mental illness and emotional illness which manifests through the body. These

are distorted conditions of ease. Disease is composed of two words, 'dis' and 'ease'. Ease, comfort, is the natural state of the body. When the natural state of balance is disturbed, it is known as disease, 'disturbed ease'. When the normal harmony of the body changes, problems occur. We have all experienced it. If we do not sleep for a couple of days, then the natural state of the body is disturbed. If there is imbalance in the respiratory system, the digestive system or the cardiovascular system, then respiratory, digestive or cardiovascular problems begin. Therefore, *bahiranga yoga* emphasizes optimum health of the body by maintaining harmony and avoiding situations which create disharmony.

Maintaining harmony is known as *anushasana*. The first statement of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* is, 'Atha yoga anushasanam'. Anushasana does not mean discipline. *Shasan* means 'to rule', 'to govern', 'to direct', 'to control', 'to guide'; *anu* means 'subtle'. According to Sage Patanjali, *Atha yoga anushasanam* means having the ability to direct and channel the subtle activities and forces that are manifesting through this vehicle. The moment you become aware of this concept and begin to observe yourself, to guide the movements of energy within and to adjust to imbalances with the idea of attaining balance, you begin yoga practice. This is a very important sutra, as it defines the entire theory and philosophy of yoga. You discover for yourself what anushasana can mean to you. It means that every day you have new ideas and as the concept develops more and more, ultimately one's whole life becomes anushasana, the ability to govern life positively and creatively, to direct the energies and forces of life to uplift oneself.

Hatha yoga – gateway to *bahiranga yoga*

The yogis said that to implement this concept, one has to begin to work with oneself, with what is tangible, visible, to be in touch with the body. How do we manage the imbalances of the body? How do we eliminate the accumulated toxins? How do we remove the pranic blockages? Asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and shatkarmas are an applied part of this

sadhana. We misuse our body day in and day out. With all this abuse of a body which is performing well, imagine how the body will perform when it is treated properly. Misuse and abuse of the body creates illness.

In order to develop physiological balance and to eliminate imbalances, the yogis described the processes of hatha yoga. Hatha yoga is the doorway to yoga because it allows you to accept yourself, to move from this physical self into the subtle realms of your nature. Bahiranga yoga is external physical practice and sadhana. Hatha yoga is the gateway to bahiranga yoga. Asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas are techniques to improve the physical system, to service this vehicle. If you drive a brand new car without having it serviced, the car will age faster; its life will be reduced by half and accidents will happen. But if you have the car serviced regularly, you ensure its optimum performance, and if something does go wrong, it can be rectified immediately. Accidents also happen in our life. You can replace your car, but you cannot change your body. If you want a new body, you have to die and take a new birth. So the choice is yours.

People who have had regular servicing have youthful bodies, even in old age. At the age of eighty they are still full of vitality, dynamism and stamina. Their eyesight is good, their digestion is good, the strength of their limbs is good and they can walk with an erect spine without having to use a walking stick. If you are regular in practising bahiranga yoga, even at the age of eighty you will be like twenty. We can see this in yogis who, although well advanced in age, follow a systematic routine and discipline.

Swami Satyananda, my guru, is over eighty, but today we cannot keep up with his routine and activities. He gets up at two in the morning and is continually moving. He refuses to have helpers and does his own cleaning and washing. He is not a mahatma who sits down and has his disciples do his work. People who have seen him are witnesses to his vitality, dynamism and clarity. We can never match his stamina and health. That is the perfection of bahiranga yoga, external yogic sadhana.

Balancing the physical and mental energies

The physical practices not only affect the physical structure, but also the pranic dimension, and harmony between the body and prana influences the mental dimension. The purpose of external yogic sadhana is not only to provide health or remove imbalances, but also to balance the physical energy with the mental energy. Hatha yoga has to be understood not as physical activity, not as the performance of physical postures, but as the realignment of the physical and mental energies. Hatha yoga is attaining balance between the physical and mental pranic forces. The word hatha is composed of the two mantras, 'ha' and 'tha'. *Ha* represents the solar force, the prana shakti or energy manifesting in and governing the body. *Tha* represents the lunar force governing the subtle mental expressions, chitta shakti, which is the energy responsible for dynamism of the mind and the growth of consciousness. The aim of hatha yoga is to balance the physical and mental activity, to harmonize the physical movement of prana and the mental experience of prana.

This is further clarified by Sage Patanjali when he is defining asana: *Sthirasukhamasanam* (*Yoga Sutras* 2:46). Asana is that posture in which one is *sthira*, immobile, and *sukham*, comfortable, where the body is still and in a state of absolute ease. Stillness, comfort and ease is the definition of asana. When we practise asanas, we say there are two kinds, dynamic and static, to explain that we have to move from a dynamic state of practice to a passive state of experience. The dynamic asanas are to loosen up the body and joints, to eliminate stress and tension from the muscular and nervous systems. The static postures help to internalize the mind. One group of asanas helps the physical body and the other group helps to internalize the awareness.

The physical activity has to be internalized and quietened, and tranquillity developed. So Sage Patanjali says that asana is that posture in which you are immobile, steady, firm, comfortable and at ease with yourself. If you interpret it from a psychological, or an emotional, or a spiritual perspective, Sage Patanjali's statement indicates that harmony exists

between body and mind. So external sadhana leads to focusing of the physical and mental energies. At this point bahiranga yoga stops and antaranga yoga, inner yoga, begins.

Holistic process of bahiranga yoga

The other practices of hatha yoga: pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and shatkarmas, are also classified into two groups. There are pranayamas which improve the performance and function of the respiratory system and regulate the breath, inhalation and exhalation, at the outer level. At the inner level they awaken the pranas which move in the pranic *nadis*, or energy channels, and are connected with the psychic centres, the *chakras*, in our system. So there are two distinct techniques and results of pranayama. Mudras and bandhas perform similar actions. The shatkarmas also represent balance between the physiological outer structure and the mental inner structure. Neti, dhauti and basti belong to the physical dimension; nauli, kapalabhati and trataka influence the chakras.

Remember that practising yoga without awareness of the chakras is only physical exercise. When you use the word yoga, you have to develop a holistic perception of your personality. In this holistic perception, not only the physical body has to be considered, but also the interaction of the physical energies and organs with the subtle energies that exist within us. This is a very subtle understanding of yoga that needs to be cultivated in order to derive the maximum benefit.

The holistic process is the merger of the mind with the body, the merger of prana shakti with the mind and body. It is the tuning of consciousness with the functions of the mind and body. This is bahiranga yoga. We have all experienced the benefits and effects of bahiranga yoga in our lives at one time or another. The management of illnesses, imbalances and diseases and the attainment of health and wellbeing is one aspect. But the real essence of bahiranga yoga lies in identifying the different functions of the energies in our system and applying the prana shakti for the fulfilment of the psychic and spiritual objectives that we have set for ourselves. We then move into antaranga or inner yoga.

Holistic Yoga – Antaranga Yoga

Antaranga yoga, inner yoga, can be described as a process of mental education, modifying our mental behaviour and nullifying the habits to which we are slaves. Patanjali's first sutra, *Attha yoga anushasanam*, defines *bahiranga yoga*, the external process of yoga. The second sutra, *Yogaschitta vritti nirodhah*, defines *antaranga yoga*, the internal process of yoga. *Antaranga yoga* is being able to control the modifications of the mind. Once the energies of the body are still and harmonized, the focus moves to the mental level of existence. Now the subtle mental force has to be directed. The *chitta vrittis*, modifications of the mind, represent fluctuations in the peaceful state of consciousness and do not allow the mind to experience peace. The normal state has been altered by an outside agent. If you throw a pebble into a perfectly still lake, ripples will be created. *Raga* and *dvesha*, attraction and repulsion, and desires, *kamanas*, are the pebbles which disturb the ease of the mind and create *vrittis*, modifications. *Antaranga yoga* teaches us how to manage these *vrittis*.

Consciousness, mind and meditation

The mind is an expression of the consciousness which is connected with the world of sense perceptions, the world of name, form and idea, the world of time, space and object. The dimension of consciousness interacting dynamically in the sensorial, material world is known as the mind. The greater body of consciousness which is not interacting in

the sensorial world is known as *chetana*. Chetana has to be conceived of as a still body of water in which everything is reflected. The surface is absolutely clear, without any ripples or distortions, and there is a perfect image of the outer scene on the surface of the water. That is the state of consciousness. The surface is like a mirror, there is no movement at all, but when a pebble of rajas or tamas or sattwa is thrown into this passive, placid mirror, into the water of the lake of consciousness, then ripples are created which further distort the image or the reflections on the surface. These ripples are vrittis, modifications.

How do we manage the vrittis? How do we again develop the peaceful and mirror-like state of consciousness in which everything is reflected with crystal clarity? Through meditation. This meditation is different to the seventh stage of raja yoga, dhyana. Meditation is also seen as two different states of mental experience. The first state is mental or inner attention and the second is inner fusion. Inner attention is becoming attentive to those activities and experiences of which you become the witness, the *drashta*, in the course of time. In the higher state of meditation, fusion takes place of the dissipated mental states and inner energies.

We need to understand these two different forms of meditation. The first stage is *ekagrata*, one-pointedness. The second stage is *dhyana*, becoming one, fusing the self-identity with the object of meditation. Ekagrata or one-pointedness is the initial practice of meditation. Merger of the total mental experiences is the final state of meditation. The seventh limb of raja yoga defines the final state because after that there is *samadhi*, continuation of the experience of oneness, unity and fusion. When the meditative state is unbroken in the final stage, that becomes samadhi. But in normal life, where our mind is distracted by the senses, where our senses are distracted by objects, attainment of this final state is not possible. We have never practised meditation; we have only used the word meditation to indicate a process or progression. However, meditation is not a practice, it is a state of experience.

Becoming aware: first step to concentration

How do we use ekagrata to modify and manage our vrittis? It goes without saying that ekagrata is a process in which we try to realize the normal behaviour of the mind, emotions and sentiments. This idea is further developed in the practices of pratyahara and dharana. Pratyahara begins with ekagrata, concentration, focusing the mind on one object. Dharana is the culmination of ekagrata, where the mind is held steady and does not move at all. The first step or stage leading to concentration is awareness, expanding the areas of perception. The act of becoming aware helps us to understand the behaviour of the vrittis.

How do you develop your awareness? How do you develop the ability to observe yourself? People adopt different methods. Some say to begin by observing and regulating the flow of the breath. Some say to become aware of the physical sensations and their influence on the mind. Others have other ideas, all of which are appropriate and correct, but they are all individual pixels on the computer screen. When you merge all the pixels, then you can see the image of the self.

Awareness of strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs

Awareness is developed not by thinking, “I’m aware of the environment,” and looking around and at yourself, not by observing your breath, not by watching your thoughts, not by observing your emotions and sentiments, not by trying to express virtuous, positive qualities. Real awareness begins by recognizing and identifying four aspects: (i) your inherent strengths, (ii) the inherent weaknesses which restrict your growth, (iii) the aspirations and ambitions which motivate your actions, and (iv) your needs, based on the realities of life.

This can be explained in a slightly different way. If I ask you to become aware and observe, what you are becoming aware of or observing are the outer expressions and reactions of your personality. If you observe your thoughts, you are watching the reactions of your mind manifesting. That is one way, but it does not fulfil the purpose. You can observe your thoughts, you can develop the ability to stop your thoughts,

you can become blank in your mind, but that is not and should not be considered as an attainment. You can observe your feelings and emotions and try to improve their quality, but do not stop there and do not consider that to be the final attainment, because it is not an attainment.

Attainment of awareness is when you have identified your strengths, weaknesses, aspirations and needs in your mind and you are able to live and behave appropriately. Otherwise many people practise meditation for thirty years, but do not know how to handle their weaknesses, how to express their strengths and are unable to differentiate between their needs and ambitions. Without that level of awareness, meditation is of no value.

Awareness, therefore, is the first step in realizing the human nature, the *swabhava*, which is governed by the cosmic nature, the *gunas*. That is the role of awareness. When you have identified and recognized your strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs, and you have been able to differentiate and discriminate between the fantasies and realities of life, then concentration begins, not before. That concentration is spontaneous; it does not involve any attempt to focus. In normal terms, concentration means making an attempt to focus, but in a real sense concentration means the development of awareness leading to mental clarity, where there is absolutely no distraction or dissipation, and you are at peace with yourself. That is the meaning of the initial *dhyana*, meditation, for the management of the *chitta vrittis*.

The *chitta vrittis* are also influenced and guided, not by desires, but by weaknesses. When the *vrittis* are guided by weaknesses, they are negative and destructive. When the *vrittis* are guided by strengths, they become *rajasic* and inspire and encourage dynamism and activity. When the *vrittis* are guided by needs, they can either be *tamasic* or *rajasic*. When the *vrittis* are guided by ambitions, again they can be coloured as either *rajasic* or *tamasic*. So once you are able to identify your own inner, subtle behaviour and recognize the *vrittis*, they can be managed with awareness, wisdom, discrimination and clarity. Only then do you become the witness, the *drashta*,

of your self. In a real sense you become a non-participating, discriminative person. You are not aloof, but only act where you need to.

In the course of time, this process develops through the various techniques and systems of pratyahara and dharana. *Dharana* means one-pointed awareness, holding that clarity of mind, holding that discriminative nature, maintaining continuity in wisdom, *prajna*. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:57) it has been stated that wisdom becomes stable in one who is balanced in life – *tasya prajna pratishthita*. When wisdom becomes stable, peace comes. When wisdom is not stable, when we lack discrimination, *viveka*, there is no stability. There can be knowledge, but there is no identification with that knowledge. The attainment of ekagrata, concentration, leads to stability of knowledge.

Experiencing the koshas

At the inner mental level, with the techniques of pratyahara and dharana and other associated practices, we come to a point where we know the subtle activities and processes of our life. An interesting experience then takes place. Yoga speaks of five dimensions of experience, which are internal. Modern psychology defines three states of mind: conscious, subconscious and unconscious. Yoga does not look at either consciousness or the mind in this manner. In yoga, there is no subconscious mind, no unconscious mind and no conscious mind, although the indications are there in the form of *jagrat*, the wakeful state of mind, *swapna*, the dreaming state of mind, *nidra*, the sleeping state of mind, and *turiya*, the internally awakened state of mind. People have tried to compare the conscious with jagrat, the subconscious with swapna, the unconscious with nidra and the superconscious with turiya, but as the understanding of yoga develops, these descriptions become inappropriate and another understanding evolves.

Consciousness by itself is a homogeneous substance which leads to different experiences. Sensorial experiences in consciousness are known as *annamaya*; awareness in conscious-

ness of the mental modifications is known as *manomaya*; movement of energy in consciousness is known as *pranamaya*; inner awareness of consciousness is known as *vijnanamaya*, and realization of the total consciousness is known as *anandamaya*. These are the descriptions of the various states of experience within the dimensions of consciousness.

Imagine the ocean; it is one body of water. Near the shore, the water is coming and going, advancing and receding. You are watching and you are able to distinguish between the water and the beach. That is *annamaya*, the interaction of consciousness with the world of name, form and idea, the interaction of energy with time, space and object. We know that light is invisible. Only in the presence of objects can light be seen or identified; in the absence of an object, light cannot be seen. The interaction between consciousness and matter is the *annamaya* experience. *Annamaya* does not mean the physical structure, but something which is manifest, an object which exists and is being illuminated by the light of consciousness, and we are aware of it. *Anna* means 'matter', *maya* means 'filled with'. When the mental perception is filled with your experience of the object: me, you, name, identity, form, idea, manifest, unmanifest, senses, that is all the *annamaya* experience.

When consciousness becomes aware of the mental modifications and recognizes them, when it becomes aware of the *vasanas*, the desires, passions, aspirations, thoughts, motivations, the *samskaras* or impressions which are the building blocks of our personality, that awareness is known as *manomaya*, the light of consciousness reflecting in the mental processes, objects and states.

When consciousness is seen in connection with the energies which are not matter, physical or manifest, that is *pranamaya kosha*, consciousness interacting with the movement, flow and current of energy. This energy is not an object, it is subtle. Just as the wind is not visible but still we experience it, the *pranas* cannot be seen but they can be experienced. Energy cannot be perceived through the naked eye, but it can be experienced by even the grossest mind.

At a deeper level, when consciousness becomes aware of its own undercurrents, in the middle of the ocean, the currents which create the waves on the surface and decide the direction of the water's movement, this subtle awareness is known as *vijnanamaya* awareness. And when consciousness becomes aware of itself without any other agents influencing its awareness, that is *anandamaya*, the harmonious, blissful state.

When we start from the initial stages of inner mental attentiveness, meditation leads us through the experience of these five different dimensions, which are known as *koshas*, sheaths or areas. We can even liken them to the different suburbs we have to pass through to get from the outer fringes to the city centre. The journey from the outer fringes of our nature to the source of our nature is known as awareness of the *koshas*. We do not know when the *koshas* change, and they keep changing from *annamaya*, to *pranamaya*, to *manomaya*, again to *pranamaya*, to *annamaya*, to *vijnanamaya* and so on. We have to go through that. Mental attentiveness leads us step by step through these different areas of consciousness towards the centre of consciousness. When we reach the centre of consciousness, the point where it began, there is only harmony, bliss, *anandamaya*. At that point, inner fusion happens.

From mental attentiveness to inner fusion

How does inner fusion happen? Swami Satyananda tells us that the process of meditation begins with triple awareness, then it becomes double, then it becomes single. Triple awareness means the object of meditation, the process of meditation and the practitioner. In the beginning we are aware of these three components: 'I am aware of myself. I am practising something that is not natural to me, but I am going through a process, a technique, which I am using to attain my aim, the object or goal I have to attain.' Our aim, wanting to attain enlightenment, or wanting to attain peace, or wanting a stress-free mind, becomes the goal. The process that we use to attain the aim, whether it is a *pratyahara* technique, a *dharana* technique, a relaxation technique or any other

technique, becomes the mode. The practitioner is the third component. Attentive meditation begins with three kinds of perception and awareness.

In the course of time, these three components become two; the process becomes a part of you, so you and the technique become one. If you have been practising it correctly, the practice becomes a part of your inner expressions, so the technique and the practitioner identify and become one. In the intermediate stage the goal, where you have to go, remains the second component. This is where lifestyle is recognized, because here you have adopted an attitude which has become part and parcel of your life. You do not have to make an attempt to sit, or find time to sit, or get upset if you do not have time to sit. The practice becomes a part of your natural behaviour and effort. Even while talking to someone, you can observe your breath, you can repeat your mantra, because it has become part of you. When something becomes a part of you, it is identified as lifestyle. When something is not part of you, it is a practice, not a lifestyle. So the intermediate stage has two components: the object, and the practitioner and the practice combined.

The final stage, inner fusion or union, is the merger between the practitioner, the process and the goal. You become that. This is how Swami Satyananda has described the sequence of meditation as we move from mental attentiveness to inner union. If you understand this concept, it will become easy to understand the approach of the yogic systems to mind management.

Transformation and overcoming habits

Along with self-observation, a transformation begins. You are able to differentiate between your aspirations and needs, your strengths and weaknesses, and you begin to identify with what is helpful for the development of your creativity. When you become aware of what will help you to improve, then you try to accept and live those principles which can be defined as sattwic, pious, pure, creative and positive. When you begin to live a state of meditation, when you begin to express that state of meditation through your actions in a positive, creative,

dharmic way, then sattwa appears. Sattwa changes certain things in life, little by little.

What is the transformation that happens? We are conditioned beings, which means we have certain physical, mental and emotional habits. How do we overcome a habit? When I was a small boy, Paramahamsaji told me, “In the beginning, a habit can be removed as easily as pulling a small plant out of the ground with two fingers. If the habit takes root in your life and grows, if you are strong enough, you can also pull it out. However, if the habit becomes a tree, there is no way you can change it.”

Take the habit of smoking, for example. If you start smoking and decide it is wrong, you can get rid of the habit immediately. Otherwise it becomes extremely difficult and you can struggle for two or twenty years. You cannot uproot that habit, you can only cut it down and ten years later the root is still there. How would you get rid of that habit? Bit by bit, by reducing it gradually and slowly. That is the process of meditation.

Conditioning is a habit. Our desires become habits and we chase after them. Ego-identification becomes a habit, arrogance becomes a habit. Conditioning restricts the free development and expansion of our consciousness. As long as we are subject to the conditionings of the mind and the habits of our personality, energy cannot be freed and consciousness cannot expand. If that does not happen, meditation has no purpose; it only becomes an escape from life. Our meditation practice is like the ostrich which feels that nobody will see it if it puts its head in the ground. We close our eyes, sit down and then go into the realm of imagination and fantasy, and through our perception create different images and visualizations. That imagination and fantasy further increases our arrogance and ego and makes us feel proud. We are only feeding our ego, not practising antaranga yoga, because we have never followed the sequence.

Process of antaranga yoga

This is the process of antaranga yoga. We are not talking about the techniques of antaranga yoga, not of pratyahara

or dharana, but of the process of meditation that we have to understand and realize. When sattwa appears in this process, where the awareness and perception and practice become part of our life, then transformation takes place. The first transformation is attitudinal. The moment attitudinal transformation takes place, karma yoga becomes part of the natural expression, bhakti yoga becomes part of the natural expression, jnana yoga becomes part of the natural expression. It is for this reason that the classical literature of yoga has never defined or identified the sequence and practices of karma yoga, bhakti yoga or jnana yoga. You may say that the *Ramayana* and *Srimad Bhagavata* say that bhakti is nine-fold, but the *Yoga Sutras* or any other classical yogic text has not defined it. Yoga says that the attitudinal transformation which happens through the practice of meditation leads to the natural expression of your emotions, which are harmonious and balanced, and it leads to the natural expression of your actions with harmony and balance. They become karma yoga, they become bhakti yoga and your understanding becomes jnana yoga. This is the process of antaranga yoga. Then comes transformative yoga, which is beyond meditation.

Holistic Yoga – Transformative Yoga

According to tantra, each chakra from mooladhara to sahasrara represents an altered state of perception, a conditioned state of inner perception. We are at the level of mooladhara chakra and we are under the influence of mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras in our normal daily life. What is the *bhava*, or conditioning, governing mooladhara and swadhisthana? The condition is instinct, which in tantra is known as *pashu bhava*. Mooladhara represents the instinctive nature. Swadhisthana represents the unconscious nature. The instinctive nature is developed in the unconscious mind, not in the conscious mind. There are four basic instincts: *ahara*, craving, *nidra*, sleep, *bhaya*, fear, and *maithuna*, the desire for creation. The instinct of fear flares up in the unconscious; craving leads one to the unconscious. When we are at the level of mooladhara chakra, the material consciousness, these four instincts govern our entire behaviour.

Swadhisthana chakra represents the inner mind, the unconscious mind, the workplace. Just as you do not know what lies beneath the surface of the ground because it cannot be seen, in the same manner, swadhisthana is that state or condition of consciousness which is unknown to the human mind, and cannot be known until the unconscious nature is transcended. According to the tantras, swadhisthana is the seat of samskaras and karmas.

Mooladhara and swadhisthana are the two chakras active in our lives. We are subject to samskaras and to the influence

of the instincts. These two chakras represent the instinctive, uncontrolled conditioning which governs the created being. As long as we live in this dimension, we are *pashu*, living at the instinctive animal level of consciousness. Humanness is only a label. In reality we are like animals, unable to discriminate and act without these conditionings.

Veera bhava is another conditioning. *Veera* means 'brave'. A warrior is confident and fearless, one who knows how to confront different situations and who tries to be victorious in all circumstances. It evokes an image of a dynamic personality, a concept of vitality, an aggressive nature, in the positive, not the negative sense. In tantra, veera bhava is defined as the nature of manipura chakra. As yoga sadhakas, we try to develop this nature first. As yoga practitioners, we try to develop the level of confidence, dynamism and vitality which allows us to confront and overcome the limitations of life.

The third conditioning is *divya bhava*, the transcendental nature. *Divya* means 'divine', 'self-effulgent'. This is beyond our range. We are still in the lower realms of mooladhara and swadhisthana. The harmonious expression of divine, virtuous qualities is a result of the manifestation of anahata and vishuddhi chakras. So something new emerges. Look at it in a linear way with five points: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata and vishuddhi. Manipura is the centre, the quality of rajas. Swadhisthana and mooladhara are the quality of tamas, the instinctive nature, the conditioning of the karmas and samskaras. Anahata and vishuddhi represent the transcendental, virtuous, divine nature, *divya bhava*.

Sahasrara – ultimate fusion

Beyond that, there is only *shoonya*, void. Vishuddhi represents space. Space contains within it the potentials of the ever-expanding consciousness, *Brahman*. It is stated in the Upanishads that space is Brahman, *Kham Brahman*. Space, that ever-expanding, ever-evolving self, is the permanent or real nature of the self. Space is the container of the principle of visible matter and invisible matter, which science calls light matter and dark matter. In the language of tantra, space is

the container of vyakta and avyakta prakriti. *Vyakta prakriti* is the manifest nature, something that is tangible, that exists and has a form. *Avyakta prakriti* is the unmanifest nature, something that exists without form. There is something there, but it does not have a form which can be perceived through the eyes. In that, everything exists.

If we turn off the light and there is absolute darkness, we do not cease to exist, but other people will not be able to see us. Colours and objects will continue to exist, but they will not be visible. When avyakta becomes vyakta, when the unmanifest becomes manifest, illuminated by the agency of consciousness, then suddenly the colours and objects become visible, the person becomes visible. This is the idea of vyakta and avyakta, manifest and unmanifest. Both are contained in space. Space is the ever-evolving principle, the supreme consciousness, Kham Brahman. Space is also God in which there is the absolute potential for generation – G, organization – O, and destruction – D. That space is the ultimate container, that space is God. Beyond that, as stated by Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* (15:6),

*Na tadbhaasayate sooryo na shashaanko na paavakah
Yadgatvaa na nivartante taddhaama paramam mama.*

Once you attain that dimension where neither the light of the sun nor the moon nor fire reach, there is no returning; that is my supreme abode.

Once we attain the level of sahasrara, there is no returning. The experience of sahasrara is the ultimate fusion, which cannot be realized. You will realize if you are separate from the fusion, but if you are part of that fusion what will you realize?

The emergence of sattwa

This is the progression of the chakras in the esoteric sense. But how do we convert this esoteric concept into a practical, liveable concept? We have discussed the process of meditation. Meditation begins with inner awareness, mental attentiveness. Mental attentiveness helps us to step back from the interactions of the material self and to observe the actions and

reactions. We progress further. The process of elimination and adjustment keeps on happening and we develop a nature, a habit, a character or a state of perception in which sattwa begins to emerge. Sattwa emerges much later. Sattwa cannot be experienced by thinking, "I will become good. I will help others." That idea is not sattwa.

Sattwa is very different to positive thinking and developing positive virtues. It is different to following a religious routine. It is different to abstaining from meat, alcohol or cigarettes. You can stop thinking ill of others, you can lead a religious, regulated life, but not be sattwic. If you think you are sattwic, you are under self-hypnosis, because sattwa only emerges when you are able to transcend or transform the animal vritti, pashu bhava, and transcend or transform divya bhava.

When you reach the level of vishuddhi, sattwa emerges. Until then, there is no sattwa. Mooladhara has no sattwa, swadhisthana has no sattwa, manipura has no sattwa and anahata has no sattwa. Sattwa emerges in vishuddhi. Here it is only changing the scripts of life, the samskaras and karmas. This is why meditation is not what we think it is. If we talk loosely, confusion prevails and clarity does not exist. But if we can undergo and experience the meditative process, then sattwa emerges after we have overcome the conditionings of pashu bhava, veera bhava and divya bhava. If we are talking of transcending pashu bhava, then we can understand how sattwa is different to the animal nature. If we are talking of transcending the warrior nature, we can also understand it, because in veera bhava 'T' becomes predominant.

However, in divya bhava also 'T' is always predominant. Even the divine nature cannot be attained without rajas. Even the virtuous, divine qualities or aspirations, even the transcendental nature you try to awaken within you is controlled by rajas. If you try to develop sympathy or compassion for somebody, to develop goodness or love within yourself, and convert conditional love to unconditional love, you make that effort and you are aware of your desire to attain those unconditional qualities. So there is struggle even there. Therefore, sattwa does not emerge until we reach the

level of vishuddhi chakra. It is in this middle process that the chakra emerges with the fusion of the meditator, the process of meditation and the object of meditation. As long as the meditator, the object and the process are different, we are in the realm of rajas and tamas. After sattwa emerges, there is a continuity of sattwa which overshadows any further expression of rajas and tamas. Sattwa gains in strength as you continue your sadhana.

Closeness to the inner self

After divya bhava, we come to a point where we experience closeness to our inner nature. In tantra, that is known as *samipya*, proximity to one's inner self. In the Bible the Book of Ezekiel describes psychic awakening in a beautiful way as the removal of the seven veils which hide the light. These veils have to be removed one by one. As they are removed, luminosity increases until the radiance is so great that one cannot bear to look at it. This is the mystical experience of Christian sadhakas and also of any spiritual sadhaka. Our beliefs may be different, but when it comes to the human mind or consciousness, the experiences are the same. These psychic or mystical experiences which have been described in the tradition and literature are real. They are experienced when sattwa has emerged, after dharana, when dhyana begins.

Kundalini yoga and kriya yoga – transformative yoga

In the state of dhyana we work at the level of vishuddhi, ajna and sahasrara. At the level of pratyahara and dharana, we are working with mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura and anahata. In our day-to-day life we are confined to the influences of mooladhara and swadhisthana. We have practised asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, shatkarma, raja yoga, meditation and so on. We have prepared and tilled the ground, but now we have to plant the right seed. For conditioned people the process defined is kundalini yoga and kriya yoga.

Kundalini yoga and kriya yoga represent transformative yoga, not antaranga or inner yoga. By transformative yoga, I

am referring specifically to kundalini and kriya yoga, which are stages beyond meditation. Meditation is not the ultimate answer. Kundalini yoga and kriya yoga give us the final answer. These practices take us to altered states of perception and consciousness, and the awakening of *kundalini*, the latent serpent power. The awakening of shakti or kundalini gives birth to tremendous fear, because one is confronting an energy never before experienced. If you touch a 220 volt electrical wire, your body will sustain a considerable shock. Imagine kundalini to be like touching an 11,000 volt wire; you will be burnt, finished!

Although you will never consciously reach out to touch an 11,000 volt wire, you will try awakening your kundalini, thinking that one day you will become a siddha. But you will be unable to handle the potential. People who have undergone kundalini awakening without instruction, preparation and guidance from a competent teacher, master or guru have ended up as crack-pots. Those people who have been able to awaken their kundalini properly have become geniuses, like Pandit Gopi Krishna. Sadhus and sannyasins at different stages of their life have gone through kundalini experiences, but it is not discussed. Only after their departure from the physical body, when the biography is published, do people find out what happened. If it were known beforehand, it would create very big problems. Therefore, kundalini yoga and kriya yoga are the final stage.

Siddhis

Kundalini is awakened by alignment of the pranas, prana shakti and chitta shakti. Kundalini is awakened when the mind is at peace with itself and not disturbed by outer influences or by inner oriented desires. Patanjali and the masters have said that in the process of kundalini awakening, latent powers, *siddhis*, emerge. Be firm and do not identify with those powers, because they are not benevolent powers. What people consider to be siddhis, the ability to read somebody's mind and influence somebody's thoughts, the ability to see the future, the so-called siddhi aspirations

that people have, are not benevolent. They are malefic siddhis because using them drags you down into the karmic quicksand from which you cannot extract yourself. The scriptures are very clear about it. Do not aspire for siddhis. Do not even look at them! If you want to practise kundalini yoga, thinking you will become a siddha, you are starting out on the wrong foot. Therefore, despite practice nobody is able to awaken their latent power.

Sequence of awakening

When kundalini is awakened in mooladhara, one overcomes the instincts, one becomes free from the attractions and desires and the bondage of the influence of fear and craving, procreation and sleep. When you are free from these four instincts, imagine what kind of mind or consciousness you will have. It is a very different state of mind to the normal state. Once kundalini reaches swadhisthana and you are able to observe the foundation of your existence, the karmas and the samskaras, and go beyond them, when you are free from the karmas and samskaras, imagine what kind of mind and perception you will have.

While passing through mooladhara and swadhisthana, you will finally overcome the last remnants of tamas and you will become a mini deva. Then, when you reach manipura, when you reach anahata, the last vestige of rajas will disappear from your life. Buddhahood, the state of inner experience and enlightenment, will be experienced. When kundalini reaches manipura chakra, the aggressive rajasic nature is transformed and transcended. The aggressive rajasic nature represents ego, *ahamkara*. Without ahamkara, there is no rajas, no arrogance, no self-image, no self-identity. The ego identity is overcome and the last vestige of I-ness, which separates one from realizing the highest nature, disappears.

When the kundalini reaches anahata chakra, the conditioned expression of emotion changes. The first realization of the inner self happens at the level of anahata in the form of luminosity, *jyoti*. It is written in the scriptures that God, the divine power, resides in the heart. The seat of the

transcendental nature is in the heart because that is where luminosity, self-effulgence is first experienced and where one overcomes conditional love and selfishness and experiences unconditional love and unselfishness.

It is stated in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (3:13),

*Angushthamaatrah purushoantaraatmaa sadaa janaanaam
hridaye sannivishtah.*

That purusha in its subtle form, no bigger than a thumb, in the form of luminosity, resides in the hearts of all living beings as their soul.

The existence of that luminous self is clouded over by the conditioned nature of the emotions. Emotion is energy in motion. The love you express is energy in motion. The compassion you wish to express is subtle energy in motion. The unselfish qualities and virtues you wish to develop are not ideas, they are experiences, energy in motion, emotions. Energy in motion is emotion. When emotion becomes stable, centred and united, and is not directed outward, then the transcendental nature is realized.

This is the concept of bhakti as well. When these energies identify with the outer nature, they take on a different form, identify, shape and experience. But when the same energy is diverted towards the self, it becomes bhakti. *Bhakti* means to be in tune with the inner, cosmic, transcendental self. Bhakti means diverting the emotions. It is here that the first experience of light happens. In the symbol of anahata chakra, there is a jyoti, luminosity, which is the symbolic representation of the cosmic nature.

Then you move up to vishuddhi. In vishuddhi, the world is transcended. Your identity with people known to you is transcended; your family is no longer your husband, wife and children. You become part of the unified whole. That is the realization. Then you move up to ajna. Anahata and vishuddhi are in proximity to that enlightened state, *samipyā*. Ajna and sahasrara are *sayujya*, identification, fusing, becoming one with the absolute. This is the ultimate yoga.

If you follow this sequence, you will succeed. If you jump from one thing to another, you will fail. Therefore, it has always been said that a competent master is a must in order to perfect and experience yoga. This is the concept of holistic yoga that the masters of yoga have given to us. This is the true concept of the holistic yoga that has come down from generation to generation of seers and sannyasins. If we adopt this understanding of yoga, there will come a time when we will experience *poornata*, wholeness, and we will be able to understand, experience and live the statement of the *Ishavasya Upanishad*:

*Om poornamadah poornamidam poornaat poornamudachyate.
Poornasya poornamaadaaya poornamevaavashishyate.*

Satsang 1

What are the benefits of singing kirtan and chanting mantras?

Singing kirtan and clapping has many benefits. It improves the circulation, activates the heart, stimulates the brain centres, removes sickness and we become happy and joyous. Mantra chanting is a tradition in India. Begin and end the day by remembering God's name. Usually we wake up to the shrill sound of the alarm clock, which jars the brain and puts us in a cranky mood, but there are alarm clocks which chant mantras instead. If we can begin the day by listening to mantras, it frees up the mental obsessions and also improves the quality of our day.

The power of mantra is such that the scriptures define it as the force that liberates the mind from bondage – *mananat trayate iti mantrah*. *Trayate* means to be free from, *iti* means is, *mantrah* means mantra, and *mananat* means continuous, obsessive thinking or brooding from which we cannot extract ourselves. Therefore, the *rishis*, the seers of ancient India, emphasized the use of mantra, not with the idea of ensuring the survival of a belief system, or to make people more god-fearing, but in order to improve the quality of life. Apart from the spiritual benefits, there are physical benefits as well. When you sing kirtan, participate wholeheartedly. You have to manifest the feeling and emotion to bring about a change in your personality. Otherwise you remain where you are. This is the secret of kirtan.

Kirtan is not devotional singing or chanting. People confuse mantras with religion, but it is incorrect to interpret mantra according to one's religious beliefs. Mantra predates the birth of any kind of religion or philosophy, as it was revealed to the ancient seers or rishis while they were in deep states of meditation, in the form of shruti. *Shruti* is divine, transcendental realization or revelation that comes through specific experiences, such as visions, dreams, or events. There are different ways to realize the self and experience the inner nature. For example, Moses witnessed a burning bush and heard God's voice proceeding from it. The rishis heard the mantras while in deep meditation with closed eyes. The Prophet Mohammed heard the mandate of God in a sound like a bell that resolved into words. Mantras are shrutis, not religious doctrine.

One can give mantras a meaning, but in reality they have no meaning. The mantra *Om* is a vibration, a frequency, which corresponds to a particular state of conscious mental experience. The mantra *Om Namah Shivaya* literally means 'I bow down to Shiva', but that is the imposition of a religious concept, because in the real sense, each syllable of the mantra corresponds to a *chakra*, a psychic centre of the body. These psychic dimensions of our nature are guided and controlled by sound frequencies known as mantras. Each dimension of the human personality is governed by vibration. It has been scientifically proven that sound vibration can create a visual image, a *yantra* because each sound frequency contains a form. Therefore, the seers gave a very apt definition of mantra as the energy that can free up the blockages in the mind and personality. The sound patterns pull us in and according to their nature make us in their image.

If one thinks negatively, the actions become negative. How can a negative thought create a negative action? How can a negative thought alter the brainwaves? How can negative thoughts cloud one's wisdom and understanding and compel one to commit an act which is harmful to other people, despite knowing what is right and wrong? Each thought is an obsession which colours the action. The purpose of mantra

is to provide the strength to extract oneself from the inner mental obsessions and brooding. The purpose of all the mantras used and identified today as religious or devotional chanting is to awaken the dormant psychic centres.

Everybody should try to participate in singing kirtan. Nobody will bother to look at you. It is our own self-image which stops us from achieving our goal. We are so engrossed in ourselves that we don't really look at others and when we do, we see our own reflection; we do not see people as they really are. That is *raga* and *dwesha*, attraction and repulsion. You are attracted to a person because you see something of yourself in that person. That feeling of compatibility is your projection. When you are repelled by a person, you are seeing something of yourself in that person, some incompatibility. Very few people can see others as they are. So participate wholeheartedly in kirtan because nobody is watching you. You are all alone. Even in a crowd you are alone, because you are only seeing yourself.

What is the significance of a mala? What effect does it have on the wearer?

Mantras are usually repeated with a mala, which helps to increase the power of mantra. In 1977, in Australia, we studied the energy fields of tulsi, rudraksha, crystal, white sandalwood and red sandalwood malas, using Kirlian photography. We placed a tulsi bead on a Kirlian plate and photographed it, then a rudraksha bead, and so on with all the different beads. We observed the aura emissions surrounding the beads, and found that each one was a different colour. The colours from tulsi were white and blue, from rudraksha orange moving into red, sandalwood had a greenish tinge, and crystal was white. In this way, it was found that each bead emitted a different colour.

Next a mala was placed on the plate and the uniform emission of the rays of the aura was observed. A person, who happened to be a psychiatrist, was then asked to do japa with the mala when he came home from work. Before he began, his handprint was photographed and it showed no emission at all, because he had used up a lot of energy during the day

in his psychiatric practice, talking and healing. When he did the first round of japa, the emissions from the mala were lost and the emissions from his hands increased. In the second round, the mala again developed its own aura, and in the third round there was an increase in the emissions from both, because they were feeding each other. First the mala fed the person, then the person fed the mala and then they both fed each other. It was a very revealing experiment.

We also looked at what has been said in the tradition about the effects of each type of mala and found that the effect was also felt by the person using the mala. For example, tulsi represents purity and rudraksha represents vitality. When the japa was done with a tulsi mala, there was a sense of tranquillity and peace. When the japa was done with a rudraksha mala, there was a feeling of increased energy. When done with a crystal mala, there was a focused feeling as if the energies were becoming centred. When done with a sandalwood mala, there was a feeling of intense joy. These feelings corresponded to the descriptions in the traditions.

We can also correlate the influence of the mala with the health of the body. The tradition says that rudraksha is beneficial for cardiovascular problems, to regulate the blood pressure and ease the heartbeat. Even today yogis and pandits prescribe the wearing of rudraksha malas for heart problems. Some even say to put the mala in water at night and then drink the water in the morning, because the energy field of rudraksha electrifies the water.

The religious traditions have also defined the use of mantra and mala. When Vaishnava mantras, such as *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevayah* and *Om Krishnaya Namah*, are performed with a tulsi mala, a feeling of purity and tranquillity is felt. Shaivas will never use a tulsi mala. Vaishnavas will never use a rudraksha mala. They came to the conclusions that a different mala is for a different mantra, as a result of their own experiences and discoveries after a lot of research. Hats off to their intuition and insight, because it corresponds to the scientific discoveries being made today in relation to malas and mantras.

However, the intuition of the guru also plays a major role, because the guru may at times give a tulsi mala and a Shaiva mantra, so that the sense of purity and the feeling of vitality interact with each other and a different experience takes place. It is a very interesting subject if you are able to study and research it. If you do not have access to equipment, at least you have access to your mind and your own experience. What you experience has much more value than any scientific experiment.

Is it necessary to have a mantra? I have tremendous faith in my Zoroastrian prayer. I find it very potent in every way and recite it all the time in my mind. Would the vibrations of a mantra be as potent or more so? Is mantra different from prayer? If so, in what way?

Prayer is a way of linking one's awareness with the cosmic awareness. However, the normal concept of prayer is praying to attain something, either peace, or prosperity, or progeny, or whatever one desires. Prayer does not involve concentration, whereas mantra does. A mantra is chanted or repeated in a meditative state in which one shuts out the influence of the world and focuses on oneself. This is one of the major differences between prayer and mantra. It does not mean that prayers are not powerful. Prayer is powerful, especially if it comes from the heart. For the fulfilment of prayer, sincerity of heart is important. If prayers are done in that manner, then they also become mantras, because they evoke certain emotions; they evoke faith, closeness to the higher self or God. If this is your method of praying, then mantra may not be necessary.

However, prayers are religious by nature, and they reflect our belief systems, the cultural traditions we have grown up with; they reflect a state of mental and psychological conditioning. There is nothing wrong with this. Mantra plays a slightly different role. Although we identify mantras with religious icons and symbols, gods and goddesses, devas and devis, that interpretation is due to our cultural and religious upbringing.

When the yogis conceived the mantras, they had the psychic and spiritual component in mind rather than the religious component. We are multi-dimensional people, and mantra works more at the subtle and psychic levels, not at the levels of emotion or belief. It is not even necessary to know the meaning of the mantras; they are just sound syllables. When these mantras are seen as individual syllables, they become the *bija* or seed mantra. *Hrim*, *Klim*, *Aim* and *Om* are seed mantras. But when these syllables are combined to create longer mantras, this represents a collection of different vibrations which influences our inner behaviour.

The real form of body or mind, emotions or spirit is vibration. Matter is nothing but compressed vibration. So when you chant a mantra such as *Om*, even though there may be no understanding of the meaning, the vibration of *Om* will influence your behaviour and alter your state of mind. One effect of mantra is that it prevents the energies from being dissipated, so the energy is then focused on a particular chakra. Therefore, despite having prayers, for personal sadhana yogis have advised the use of mantra. The vibrations of mantra are subtle in nature. If they are able to align your thoughts and emotions and give you the feeling of peace, joy, inner courage, strength and clarity, then the purpose of mantra is fulfilled.

If the mantra is not recited with the proper pronunciation, does it have an adverse affect?

One should definitely try to make the pronunciation perfect, but if the pronunciation is not perfect, it does not matter. Internalization of mind still takes place. You may not be able to access the dimension of your personality which is in harmony with the vibration of the mantra. Sometimes people say they have been practising the mantra 'songhou', when actually the mantra is 'soham'. Now although they are not the same mantra, the words are similar when you hear them. But *Soham* is the pure vibration and adding other syllables to it, which many people do, may not give the same result. Nevertheless it will improve your concentration, it will internalize the mind

and you will feel peace. You may not awaken the prana shakti, but you will definitely feel tranquillity. Incorrect pronunciation does not have a negative effect, but if the pronunciation is correct, you can definitely go much deeper into experiencing yourself. Certain distortions do happen in mantra due to language differences. In yoga, when we are giving mantras, we tell people, “Just be as precise as you can. Just read what is written and condition yourself to that frequency.”

Satsang 2

Swamiji, you spoke of the state of evenness that existed and into which that small blight of iccha, or desire, appeared. It is the same in the Bible, where in Genesis, God decided or had the thought to create the universe. Why should God spoil the evenness and create the universe? From where did iccha come? How did it appear?

According to the big bang theory of the origin of the universe, in the beginning everything was together, but through a process of chemical reactions a huge explosion took place which set free all the matter and energy. This is the scientific theory of the origin of the universe. If we transpose this idea to a philosophical background, then that reality was once together, being the source and storehouse of knowledge, omniscience. Wherever there is knowledge, there is also bound to be some form of desire. Knowledge without desire is not knowledge, so desire is an integral part of knowing. The desire actualizes knowledge; it is the fulfilment of that knowledge.

You could say it was an inner *spandan*, a vibration. *Spanda Karika*, a treatise of Kashmir Shaivism, says that in the state of tranquillity and union, knowledge itself gives birth to desire in the form of *spandan* or vibration. That *spandan* identifies the *kriya shakti* of God, the power of action. Desire without action is not desire. Desire with action is desire and the fulfilment of that desire. Therefore, in the tantric tradition, *jnana shakti*, the power of knowledge, *iccha shakti*, the power of desire, and *kriya shakti*, the power of action, are the three continuous

components of Godhood; they are not separate. When desire arises due to knowledge, action is bound to happen. Action will always take you through a process of development and fulfilment; action will not give fulfilment instantaneously.

Are we victims of our own destiny?

Destiny is not the only component; there is another component known as *purushartha*, self-effort. We can look at destiny and *purushartha* in the following manner. A developer constructs a building and the potential owner has no say in that construction. The plans are approved and the building is erected. If we want to buy it, we get a ready-made building, but we have the free will to decorate it in our own way. *Purushartha* is living in and adjusting to our environment according to our need. Destiny is the raw material we receive. So the empty building we buy from the developer is destiny. How we choose to live in that building, how we furnish and decorate it is *purushartha*. That is free will. So free will and destiny both go together. We have received a body and we have to work with it throughout our life, but how we manage our body is up to us. The body is destined; maintaining the body is *purushartha*. The mind is destined, but how we educate our mind is *purushartha*. So what God has given is actually a blank manuscript and he says, "Write your own story."

But when you find someone suffering in an amazing way, where every kind of wrong seems to befall them, then what is that?

That is karma, not destiny. Karma is reaping the results of the action; it is an integral part of the conscious expression. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, it is said that when a soul comes into the world, it comes with its companion, the mind, which indicates that the mind and the soul move together. The soul is existence; the mind is the agent through which existence expresses itself. They go together just as the shadow is an integral part of the body, or strength is inherent in the muscles, but only expresses itself when there is a need.

This mind is the storehouse of impressions, which are seen and recognized in the form of karma. The Indian yogis also

say that karma continues even after the body dies, because it is not part of the body, but impressions in the consciousness. They are like writing on water which cannot be seen, yet they have a very strong influence on human behaviour. Therefore, the theory of karma has evolved along with the theory of destiny, *prarabdha*, and *purushartha*.

What is the difference between *purushartha* and *swartha*?

The outcome of *purushartha* is attainment of the four goals of human life: *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*. *Purusha* is the self, *artha* is attainment. The attainments that lead to the fulfilment of your aspirations become *purushartha*. When 'swa' is added to 'artha', it becomes *swartha*, self-oriented action, something you wish to attain for yourself. *Purushartha* is action which uplifts you, and can be *sakama*, self-oriented, and also *nishkama*, selfless. It is a change of attitude and perception, like saying the glass is half full or half empty.

Can you liken the doctrine of karma to the play of DNA, where DNA is your life program?

Yes, but when DNA theory says your life is programmed, it is more in the physical sense, relating to the body, not the mind, not consciousness. *Purushartha* is a more holistic approach, involving the experience of the body as well as that of spirit.

Are all thoughts fixed from desires?

The majority are. You differentiate between a thought and a desire.

In my limited experience there seems to be an urge before the thought.

There is an urge, but you don't understand the urge. When the intellect translates that urge into something tangible and comprehensible, it becomes a thought. Where there is fire, there is heat, but when you identify the heat emanating from the fire, that recognition will be in the form of a thought, "It is hot, it burns." So the component of rationality behind that urge is known as a thought, which makes you aware of the urge.

Is evil or destiny the stronger force in life? Can one's own evil be a stronger force than destiny?

There is nothing stronger, there is nothing weaker; they are both the same expressions. It depends where your awareness is directed according to the gunas.

Can one really change destiny?

Destiny cannot be changed. Those who change destiny are not ordinary people. For example, my horoscope said I would destroy my family. Now if I were not a sannyasin, maybe I could have become a criminal and killed all my family members, but I became a sannyasin and that also represents destruction of the family.

Today I am feeling guilty about joining yogic life and leaving family life.

Wearing geru is not yogic life, it is sannyasa life. Don't confuse sannyasa with yoga. Sannyasa is a vocation; yoga is a practice. You will never feel guilty practising yoga, but you may feel guilty adopting geru.

I want to do yoga but the family doesn't really accept it.

It is a misunderstanding. You wish to practise yoga and your family believes that yoga will make you resign from the world. If you have that desire, you should be able to convince your family by presenting them with the true picture of yoga.

Should we just forget about everything else then and only focus on free will.

Live in the present. If you live in the present, you are beautifying your own free will.

Is it a certain level of consciousness that allows one to overcome the pull of karmas?

You can free yourself from the pull of karmas. Someone once asked Swami Satyananda how we know that we are progressing in spiritual life, and he replied, "By the lessening of desires."

Could it be that it comes with age?

Age or maturity. One can also become mature at an early age, like Vivekananda, Shankaracharya and many others.

Swami Satyananda has said that desire should not be repressed because it can lead to mental disorders, that desire leads to karma and karma keeps you occupied.

Once a man went to a sadhu and said, “I want to control a spirit.” When the sadhu asked him why, he replied, “I am very frustrated and want some peace and prosperity, a home and a family.” The sadhu said, “Controlling the spirits to do your bidding is not advisable.” But the man insisted, so the sadhu finally said, “Well, then you will have to reap the consequences,” and he gave him a mantra.

Eventually the man was able to invoke a genie. He told it to make him a palatial home and instantly the home was created. Money, cars, television, air-conditioning, all the luxuries appeared in an instant. Servants appeared out of nowhere. A wife appeared out of nowhere. When he had everything, the man said to the genie, “OK, now you can go. You have done your duty.” But the genie said, “No. You called me to perform and that is what I am going to do. If you cannot give me any work, then I will eat you up.”

The man became very frightened and asked the sadhu for a method to get rid of the genie. “My life is more precious than all the wealth and prosperity in the world,” he said. The sadhu replied, “There is no mantra to take back the genie.” The man begged for help and finally the sadhu advised him to tell the genie to erect a greased bamboo pole and climb up and down it. Of course, the genie is still busy trying to climb that pole today!

You have the karma, you have the desire, you have everything. As long as you are chasing after them, they will chase you, but the moment you are able to divert their attention and focus in another direction, you become free.

Another example is emotion. When you express your emotions for other people, they take on a form. Your emotional relationship with your mother is one of love, with

your lover it is passion, with your elders it is respect, and with those you consider to be your adversaries it is animosity. Your relationship with material objects is greed. The same emotion takes on different forms when it interacts with different beings and objects. At present the emotion is being directed outwards, but when you direct the same emotion inwards, it becomes bhakti. You have not rejected the outer expression of the emotions; you have only redirected the emotion towards God. The emotion directed towards money, material gain, your lover, family, friends and adversaries takes on a different form when directed towards God.

You can apply this principle to everything. It doesn't mean that you have to divert everything towards God all the time. There are people who do that, but then there are people who can divert these energies towards their own creativity. Redirecting these energies frees a person from the attractions and bondage which are created by our association with the material world. That is known as overcoming or transcending the karmas associated with external, material life.

What is the role of yoga and viyoga in creation?

Yoga is union and *viyoga* is separation of purusha and prakriti. Creation is the outcome of viyoga, not of yoga. It is the separation of purusha and prakriti, and prakriti becoming independent. Nobody can say why the separation took place, not even the seers, because it is way beyond the mental comprehension and beyond the scope of science.

How do you know that something is the power of destiny?

At the time you can't. Only at the fag end of your life, when you reflect upon what has happened and the efforts you put in and where you succeeded and failed, then you realize that there is a pattern, and some patterns have remained unchanged and they form part of the destiny. There are certain patterns you are able to create, and they represent part of your purushartha. But at present you cannot realize that. Swami Satyananda himself has said that only today has he come to realize that what he has achieved in his life was destined. What was not

destined, no matter how hard he tried, he has not attained. He has said that this realization comes much later when we have become mature enough to witness ourselves, not when we are part of and swimming with the current. It is one of those mysteries which has no answer.

Can we say that destiny is something that you just write off to an unknown force, and that conscious destiny is something that you work with?

When we write off something, saying it is destined to happen, we become confused. Don't write off anything, but constantly make the effort, the purushartha. At the end, what you have attained will reflect what was destined and what your purushartha was. But in the beginning when you are doing it, don't write off anything. Don't be a fatalist, but have faith in yourself.

We conceptualize the theory of karma. Yet after death, scientifically, we really don't know what's happening and it still seems we are carrying our samskaras in our next birth.

If you look at a seed, you will discover the theory of karma. You plant a mango seed in the ground; eventually it becomes a tree and bears mangoes, not bananas, apples or any other kind of fruit. After you have eaten the fruit, the seed that remains again has the same potential to become a mango tree. That is continuity. The expression of the inherent molecule in nature is the karma; fulfilment from seed to fruit, from fruit to seed, seed to fruit, fruit to seed. So burn the seed, fry the seed in burning oil, plant it and see what happens.

Satsang 3

Is it possible for high souls to take on people's karma?

Enlightened beings can do it. When Ramakrishna Paramahansa had throat cancer, he was asked, "You claim to be in constant communion with Mother Kali. Why can't you ask her to cure you?" He replied, "Yes, I can ask her and she will cure me. I don't need any medical intervention or treatment. This cancer is the outcome of the sufferings of my disciples that I have taken upon myself. If I remove it from myself, where will I put it? Someone has to inherit it, and if I give those karmas to my disciple, I'll be cured, but then that person will suffer from cancer."

In *Autobiography of a Yogi* it is mentioned that after his death Sri Yukteshwar appeared before Swami Yogananda in a hotel in Bombay. It was his flesh and blood body, not his astral body. Even in that state of existence, because they have become enlightened, such souls have the ability to remove the pain and suffering of their disciples. When that happens, people call it a miracle.

Swami Satyananda has said very clearly that if God asks him if he wants to go back, he will say, "Yes, I want to go back and I want to keep coming back until I am able to wipe away the tears of everyone." Enlightened beings do it out of compassion. You don't have compassion, therefore, you seek enlightenment. But they have compassion and they crave to come back to work for the salvation of mankind. It is the path of Bodhisattwa, examples of which can be seen in the *Jataka kathas*, stories of the previous lives of Buddha.

Many of us spend our entire life like a rat in a wheel. Because we can't be in touch with ourselves, we can't be in touch with other people. How would you advise people like us to structure our lives?

An example is King Janaka. He was a king with responsibilities, affluence and wealth, everything we can aspire for in life. But he was one-pointed. When the sage Shukadev came to him for advice on how to lead a spiritual life, he saw the glory and splendour of Janaka's palace and kingdom, and he thought, "This man who lives in the material world cannot become my teacher." Nevertheless, he asked King Janaka for the secret of enlightenment. King Janaka said, "First I want you to visit the city. There is a festival in progress and everything has been beautifully decorated. But there is one condition. In your hands take a pot filled with oil. If even a single drop falls on the ground, my guards will behead you."

Shukadev toured the city and when he returned, King Janaka asked him how he liked the decorations. Shukadev replied, "What decorations? My entire focus was on this pot of oil." Then Janaka said, "Look up above my throne." Shukadev looked up and there was a sword hanging by a single strand of hair. King Janaka said, "It can fall at anytime. When I am sitting on my throne, I'm aware of that sword and I wish to complete my duties and obligations in the best manner possible in case it falls on me and I die."

We can also cultivate that focus and awareness. We have the sword hanging over us, but we ignore it. Let us become aware of the sword and then see how our performance changes. A businessman can improve his business if there is awareness of the sword suspended above. A sadhu can become a better sadhu knowing that time is limited. It is that awareness of the transient nature of life which Shankaracharya refers to in *Bhaja Govindam: Angam galitam palitam mundam dashana vihinam jatam tundam*. You never know what is going to happen because you are becoming weaker and weaker every moment. There is no certainty that you will be alive the next moment. So it is an attitude, an awareness, that you need to cultivate.

What is atmaswaroop?

Atmaswaroop means seeing oneself in another person. What I am, that you are, a reflection of my own nature. *Atmaswaroop* also means the reflection of God's image.

Can we see it?

Not with the two eyes which look at the material world that we call reality. You can see it through the third eye, which is the eye of Shiva.

Is it possible for people like us to see?

No, for that you have to change your lifestyle completely. You can't have your cake and eat it too. You can't live with your feet in two boats; you have to choose one boat.

Please explain further about kundalini and sushumna nadi.

Viyoga is separation of Shiva and Shakti, the descent of kundalini. Kundalini is not just connected with its true source in sahasrara, it is also at the opposite end of the spectrum. There is separation. Yoga is kundalini returning to Shiva, the ascent of kundalini. Sushumna is the symbolic passage by which kundalini descended and will ascend again. Yoga is realization of the transcendental nature; viyoga is realization of the material nature. We are here because of kundalini having descended to and existing in mooladhara. If kundalini was not in mooladhara, I would not be here. You would not be able to recognize me and I would not be able to recognize you. Creation is the result of kundalini in mooladhara.

Is peace of mind an abstract concept or can it be realized?

Peace of mind is the realization that you have the ability to find your own balance in life. Swami Satyananda has said, "There is no peace in the Himalayas and no noise in the world; it is only an experience of the mind." If the mind is not balanced, then even in the Himalayas you will not find peace. If the mind is balanced, then in the middle of the road you will not hear any noise. So it is a state of existence, a state of balance between your desires and interactions in the world.

How can one make oneself more receptive to the messages that one gets?

What messages do you get? If you know a message is coming from the guru, it is a compelling force which leaves no scope for your alterations. But you are getting messages from your own mind. I don't subscribe to the idea that we receive messages. The outcome of yoga sadhana is the fine-tuning of consciousness. In that fine-tuning, sometimes a link is created with our inner nature. Right now, the mind has only one screen. All the channels are on and the images are appearing simultaneously on that one screen, and you are asking me to decide which is the right one! You will have to do that by ensuring that only one channel appears at one time. That can happen through meditation, through sadhana. Once you are able to do that, then ask me the question.

Aren't the yoga practices of pranayama, dharana and dhyana all part of sadhana?

Sadhana means practice, continual effort, something which you perfect. Sadhana is attaining perfection. If you do asana, asana can be one hundred percent sadhana. If you do meditation, meditation can be one hundred percent sadhana. Until you attain perfection in it, it is sadhana, regardless of age. I would recommend twenty-five percent asana, twenty-five percent pranayama, twenty-five percent personal stress management and twenty-five percent meditation. There has to be an equal division.

Why did you become a sannyasin at an early age?

Because it was perceived by my guru that I had reached a point in my life where this was important for my growth. If it had not been important, today I would be married with children, a profession and a job. There is a level of realization which I won't know, but either the guru or my own inclinations will indicate. It is said in the *Yoga Sutras* also that we come with a spiritual predisposition. We have reached a point and we carry on from that point; we don't start from the beginning again.

A desire which I've experienced leads to ripples of thoughts and rational thought illuminates even this urge. That is also seen as one of its many reflections. Then my menial mind works and says maybe this thought did not come from desire; it does not have these reflections.

Then it is not a thought anymore. It is only an expression and there is no awareness by the individual of that force expressing itself. There is the story of a sadhu who practised a lot of austerities to attain God-realization. Finally, God appeared to him and said, "Ask for a boon." The sadhu said, "I have nothing to ask. My intention was to have your darshan. Beyond that there is nothing I desire," and he walked away. However, God had to fulfil his promise and so he blessed the sadhu's shadow with the power of healing. The shadow fell on a sick person, who recovered; on a dead tree, which again became green, laden with flowers and fruits; and on a dead person, who returned to life. The sadhu did not know that God had granted his shadow this power of healing. At that point thoughts don't exist. There cannot be a thought without reflection. There cannot be an image in the mirror until you stand in front of it.

How can we accept the loss of a loved one?

People undergo suffering and seek advice in order to understand and overcome it. The solace they seek is important, but the nature of the mind is such that we become obsessive about the loss, which does not allow an understanding of how to accept that loss and carry on. We identify so much with our suffering that acceptance becomes difficult. If we are able to let go of that attachment, it also helps the departed soul. There are many examples of people who have accepted it and felt peace, and there are examples of people who have not accepted it and who suffer internally.

You have to make a choice between letting go and holding on. This is spoken of in the *Bhagavad Gita*. At that time meditation is important to realize where your attachments are and how to let them go. Faith in God is important in order to realize that he gave the gift and he can take it away.

Gradually, you have to change the psychological set-up to accept the loss and to appreciate the opportunity you were given to nurture the loved one, as your contribution to life, to existence and to God.

I've been through loss and trauma and have not been comfortable for five years. I have been wanting to speak to you or Paramahamsaji about this.

Paramahamsaji has taught us attitudes. He is not a teacher of asana, pranayama and the physical practices. In his satsangs, speeches and writings he has given solutions to all the problems that people have. He has said very clearly that one reason why he stopped meeting people was because they do not follow the teachings. Everyone wants some personal input, and the basis of the communication will be what has already been said. However, if an understanding of that teaching and how it could have been applied had evolved and developed, this question would not have arisen today. What has been written in our books is the *vidya*, the knowledge, and neither Paramahamsaji nor I will change those ideas person to person.

There are conditions and states which are uniform everywhere. You just have to be open and understand that you need to look at the teachings, such as *Bhakti Yoga Sagar* or the other books. There have been many questions on this subject and Paramahamsaji has answered each one. Why do you deny yourself the opportunity to live the teaching? Why are you searching for intellectual satisfaction? Intellectual satisfaction will not help you because the psychological dimension will still be there. This was one reason why Paramahamsaji said when he started his sadhana in Rikhia, "Don't ask me about your personal problems. I have said everything. Now my role is that of a spiritual person, not a counsellor." Everything is in his teachings. So one should try to understand the instruction or guideline of the guru in order to imbibe the teaching and expand one's awareness.

How does one live in the present or now while being effective in planning for tomorrow?

The past gives us an experience and an understanding. The present gives an opportunity to use that past experience and understanding to improve and perform well in the present. How you act today and what you believe in today decides your tomorrow. Generally, we tend to ignore past experiences and not care about the present because we are continually worrying about the future. We do not give enough attention to the present. This is the common trend. One factor that helps in this process is meditation. In meditation, according to the present circumstances and situations, you observe the experiences of the past and ensure that you do not commit the mistakes of the past today. Plans for the future are made instantaneously and the road becomes clear. Our folly is that we don't learn from past mistakes and commit the same mistake in the present also. There are sadhanas in meditation that can make us aware of the teaching, the essence, the experience that we have derived from our particular situation and, using that experience, to modify our present.

As far as planning for the future is concerned, one can think of it in professional terms, in family terms, in terms of aspirations, whether materialistic or spiritual. But recognize where your strengths lie and use that understanding to plan for the future in a positive manner. There should be positive planning for the future. Months of planning will go into a negative action such as a robbery, but there is hardly any planning for a positive action. We have to understand and apply that idea to our situation, and not rush headlong into it just because an opportunity has presented itself. If an opportunity presents itself, there has to be an understanding of how we can use it to create more opportunities to excel. Meditation will definitely help.

How can we change?

We are all slaves of our habits. Habits are good and bad. We have to change them gradually and slowly. Take the word habit. Begin by removing the 'h' and you are left with 'a bit'.

Then remove the 'a' and you are left with 'bit'. Then remove the 'b' and you're left with 'it'. That is how you need to be in your life. Rather than changing everything instantaneously, just remove one letter at a time. And remember that satsang is not only talking. The aim of satsang is for you to have *sat*, truth, as your companion in life.

Satsang 4

How does one perfect surrender in material and spiritual life?

Perfection cannot be defined because the moment you define perfection, it is not perfect anymore. The main point here is surrender, *samarpan*. *Samarpan*, which is translated as surrender, means total offering, from *sam* meaning 'total', and *arpan* meaning 'offering'. Total offering comes when you think of yourself as a trustee. It is an attitude. We have wealth, but do we only use it to increase our level of luxury, comfort and status, or can we also offer part of it for some divine work? Whether you call it humanitarian work or God's work is irrelevant. When you see yourself as a trustee, then you see that it does not belong to you; you are only a caretaker, a manager, only the implementer of a plan. But when you see yourself as the *karta*, the doer, not as a trustee, then you feel you have the right to become the *bhokta*, the enjoyer, and then surrender cannot take place. Surrender happens when you become the doer, but leave aside the desire to be the enjoyer. If that idea is followed in the spirit of the law, there is fulfilment and satisfaction in your life and through you fulfilment and satisfaction in other people's lives. There is contentment in God's mind as well. That is true surrender.

Can one be at peace just being in touch with oneself and not doing anything else?

The question is incorrect. You are doing everything. Peace has to be attained while doing everything, not when you are doing nothing.

Does that peace come by being in harmony with yourself without filling your life with creature comforts?

If you don't do anything and just sit quietly in search of peace, peace will not come. Night follows day, day follows night. Unless there is involvement and struggle, peace is never appreciated. If peace comes without struggle and participation, it is lethargy, not peace. Peace is the outcome of balanced, harmonious interaction with the world. It is the opposite of struggle. It was for this reason that Swami Satyananda has said, "There is no peace in the Himalayas and there is no noise in the world." It all exists in your own mind; it is your own perception.

What is the non-doership attitude?

Non-doership is not identifying. You are referring to the attitude of *karta*, 'I am the doer', where you are the centre of the universe. But when you are not the *karta*, you only become an instrument, yet you continue to do everything with the idea that 'I am only an instrument'. That is non-doership. This was the message that Krishna gave to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Don't think that you are fighting others, don't think you are going to kill them, don't think you are going to commit genocide. Don't identify with your act; identify with your dharma. Identification with dharma involves not only the present, but the whole of life. That is non-doership.

A practical example is the teaching Swami Sivananda gave to Swami Satyananda when he asked what was expected of him after taking *sannyasa*. Swami Sivananda said, "Just stay in the ashram and continue doing the same jobs you would at home, working in the kitchen, the office, managing the finances, typing and editing articles, printing books, building construction, looking after visitors, and so on."

Paramahamsaji said, “But if I have to do the same work in the ashram as I was doing at home, I may as well go home and work there.”

Swami Sivananda said, “If you do that, instead of purifying yourself you will accumulate karmas because you will be working for yourself, for your own satisfaction. But in the ashram you will have the attitude that you are doing seva for your guru, working for the welfare of others, offering your services to God and guru. In that way, you will not be attached to the results or the fruits of the karmas and you will not accumulate any karma. At home *raga* and *dvesha*, attraction and repulsion, will highlight themselves and you will bind yourself with your karmas.” The idea that ‘I am the doer’ binds one to the karma, whereas dedicating it to guru or God liberates one from the karma.

When painful experiences come up, how does one deal with them?

By being the *drashta*, the experiencer, not identifying with the experience but witnessing it. When a painful memory comes up, instantly you identify with it. You have identified with it in the past because that was the time you went through it. Now it remains in the form of a memory. Years have passed, but when the memory surfaces again, identification takes place, ‘I’ becomes predominant. At that moment you have to observe it like a third person, then you have to release it.

The answer is meditation. The practice of antar mouna is a way of achieving this because it involves observation of the thoughts. A memory comes up, thought patterns are created, you are sucked into it. A memory comes up, thought patterns are created, you observe it and say, “OK, done and gone.” This also happens in yoga nidra. In yoga nidra you hear the instruction, “Develop the memory of pain, develop the memory of pleasure,” because in that state of heightened, intense relaxation, if you are able to bring out those impressions from the psyche, then it is like cleaning your room. The unfortunate part is that you don’t know how to clean your mind, and depend on the guru to clean

it. Therefore, the first benefit of meditation is always self-empowerment. You empower yourself to face such situations, to clean the room of the mind.

Can pain be stored as a memory?

Pain, whether it is physical, emotional or mental, is contained as memories. There was a young boy who had an operation on his gallbladder under general anaesthesia and felt no pain during the operation. However, his body had undergone a trauma which was ingrained in the cells of the body. Four or five years later, when he was doing yoga nidra, he felt a stabbing pain in the region of the gallbladder. It was so severe that he did not want to practise yoga nidra anymore. He was reliving the pain which his brain had blocked.

Why do some people die at a young age?

Everybody has a destiny. The rishis and sages have said that we all come with our destiny written. The brightest and most brilliant people have short lifespans and buddhas live the longest. We can interpret this as meaning that buddhas conserve their energy and therefore live the longest, whereas the bright use their creativity, fulfil their dharma and depart quickly. However, this is inference only. Shankaracharya and Vivekananda are examples of people who lived for a short time, but illuminated the paths of many. Then there are ordinary people who can expect to live maybe for seventy or eighty years.

Some people also come to fulfil certain debts and karmas. A family, who were very close devotees of Paramahamsaji, brought their child to Paramahamsaji when he was six or seven. The father asked Paramahamsaji to give the child a mantra. Paramahamsaji said, "If you want him to live, you should never let him take a mantra from anyone." Due to parental emotional attachment they did not understand what Paramahamsaji was indicating and they put a lot of pressure on him. Finally, Paramahamsaji said, "Okay, I will give him a mantra, but be ready for the consequences." He gave the mantra and within a week the child died.

When the family cried, Paramahamsaji said, “I warned you. This child had come only to meet a guru because that’s where his growth was blocked in his last life. The moment he met a guru and received the mantra, his work was over.” The dharma or the purpose for which he had come had reached its conclusion, and that was his destiny. This is one way evolution is perceived; the other is through emotional attachment. It is important to remember that darshan of a siddha purusha or god changes destiny.

I have been practising vipassana for a while. Now I find pranayama helpful to develop kumbhaka. Will vipassana speed up my spiritual progress?

Nothing speeds up spiritual progress. Everything prepares the ground for spiritual improvement and development. If I hold my breath, it will not help me spiritually. If I can stand on my head in sirshasana and do every kind of mental activity and gymnastic in sirshasana, it is not going to help my spiritual progress. We only prepare the ground for the experience of life. Spiritual progress happens when we are sincere and committed to the path. If you want to find water, instead of digging fifteen holes one foot deep, dig one hole fifteen feet deep. If you dig holes all over the place, it will not speed up the process of finding water. So whether you do vipassana or combine yoga with vipassana, it is your commitment, sincerity and conviction that will help you, not the practice.

Vipassana is a pratyahara practice. It was developed by Mahatma Buddha, just as yoga nidra was developed by Swami Satyananda and transcendental meditation by Maharshi Mahesh. Techniques to harmonize the mind have been developed according to people’s need. Have you ever wondered why pratyahara techniques were developed, not samadhi techniques or dhyana techniques. The aim of vipassana is *vichara shoonyata*, freeing the mind from thoughts. In Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures, vipassana is another name for antar mouna. So, just as you use any yoga technique to enrich your pratyahara practice, you can use any yoga technique to enrich vipassana.

It is said that a child's spiritual development and education begin before birth. What should the mother's role be?

I have not had the experience of motherhood, but I have had the most wonderful mother. My ideal of motherhood is my mother who gave me the samskaras, a vision and a goal in life. My mother did not stunt my creativity, rather she opened the door and let me choose my own way. In this regard even my guru is my mother because he also gave me the samskaras and opportunities to chart out my own path in life.

The vedic tradition states that the spirit enters the womb in the fourth month after conception. This has been proven. At this time, the mentality of the mother begins to form the psychology of the child. Now, even in the West, medical professionals suggest that pregnant women should avoid alcohol, smoking and eating meat, and should listen to classical music and watch inspiring movies rather than those which agitate the body, mind and emotions. A particular way of life is being recommended during pregnancy. This was the trend in ancient India as well. Once the spirit enters the womb and the body of the foetus, the slate is absolutely clean, there is no conditioning. Experiments have been carried out on the effects of mantra chanting, singing kirtan and reading spiritual literature during pregnancy. The mental and physical conditions influence the growth and future creativity of the child after birth.

In the *Mahabharata*, there is the story of Abhimanyu, who learnt the science of warfare when he was in the womb. There is also the story of Shukadev, which may or may not be true. His father Vyasdev was an enlightened rishi. After nine months the boy said from the womb, "I am not coming out." The father asked, "Why?" Even the internal dialogue took place with the spirit. He said, "I have been taught that the world is transitory, so why should I come into a transitory world?" Vyasdev was in great conflict. The story goes that the child remained in the womb for nineteen years.

Stories apart, it is true that the child's education begins in the womb and the inculcation of values, the attainment of positive samskaras, the building blocks of life, happens before

development of the intellect. Our nature is formed before we start school and develop our rationality and intelligence. The real you, what you are today, was formed prior to your first day at school. At school, intelligence and understanding develop, but it is an intellectual, linear, logical understanding that evolves – two plus two equals four, memorizing the names of the emperors of India, etc. This understanding evolves through intellectual education. Mathematical calculations, history, anatomy, physiology, the sciences, arts, all represent intellectual growth, but personality growth happens before your first day at school. Now the focus has to be on providing the right atmosphere at home, not being dependent on teachers and friends and the education system. They have a role to play, but the mother is the most important figure in the child's life. The mother is the first guru.

My mother experimented on me, and I have experimented on two people. A German girl came to the ashram with her parents when she was six months old. We played cassettes of mantras, bhajans, kirtans and satsangs to her while she was asleep. When she returned to the ashram one year later, her mother asked me to give her a spiritual name, so I held her hands and said, "Om Mani." Two days later, she walked up to me and said in German, "Ich bin Om Mani" (I am Om Mani).

When she went to nursery school, after two days she said she knew all the subjects and refused to go back. After learning at home with yoga nidra, she went to primary school where she was above her age group in her class. Five months later she was moved to a higher class, where she was also above her age group. Again they changed her class and the same thing happened. She would say, "I know the subject." Where did this samskara come from?

The other experiment is Swami Suryaprakash. I was present at his birth and have been his guide since he was born. So the role of a mother is not only to nurture, but to provide the right direction and samskara in life. The best samskara you can give is spiritual because the other material will be received from society anyway. Provide your children with

spiritual samskaras. As a spiritual tendency develops people sometimes fear that the person will leave home and become a recluse, a sadhu. But if the spiritual samskara is given from the beginning, there is no question of leaving society. Rather they become more aware of dharma and become a responsible citizen of the world.

According to Swami Sivananda, the fulfilment of life takes place by sowing the right seeds in the fertile ground of the personality. It is older people who need systematic yoga – hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, mantra yoga, japa yoga. All these yogas help to break the conditioning of the personality and mind. But children don't have any conditioning to break; they don't need any transformation. They don't need to know how to practise kundalini yoga or the theory behind it, they don't need to know hatha yoga or the theory behind it. Just let the practice itself bring out their inherent qualities and latent powers. Yoga will write the script of their life, not the family conditioning, not the aspirations of their parents. When children adopt yoga from the beginning, they become better citizens of tomorrow.

How can we help others?

There is a lot of confusion in people's minds about how to help others. When an opportunity arises, help them, but at the same time see if you can help in different ways as well. Swami Satyananda says this very clearly. When a person is hungry, give him something to eat, but don't stop there. Teach him how to fish also, so that he doesn't have to beg anymore. Since Paramahamsaji has been in Rikhia, we have realized the validity of this statement. He has said that if every well-off person were to adopt a poor family and look after their pressing needs, in less than a decade India would no longer be poor. The ancient vedic tradition also says that you should set aside part of your income. All religions say this now. Keep ninety percent for yourself and ten percent for others, because those who are not earning also have a right to it.

Are Swami Satyananda's ideas becoming reality?

They have become reality. We need to be aware that the majority of Indians still have a rural agrarian mentality. In rural areas they have to work hard for three or four rupees. Do they work to eat or do they go to school to educate themselves? This is the reality of Indian society. With two rupees they cannot feed and clothe a family of four. They cannot save something for tomorrow in these circumstances. It is a hand-to-mouth existence. Therefore, their priority is not education, it is survival. First, teach them how to survive, then bring in education. Telling them to educate themselves is like putting the cart before the horse. The realities of life in Indian society must be recognized. If we wish to copy, adopt and implement anything, it has to be in accordance with the reality the society has faced for hundreds of years.

Today Sivananda Math is responsible for fifty villages. Everyone has helped us; we could not have done it alone. We started with one village and slowly it has become fifty. In another ten years it could become one hundred. Once this new ball starts rolling, it just keeps getting bigger and bigger. Some people have contributed ten rupees, some thousands and some tens of thousands. Everyone has contributed in their own way. We have been able to create that bridge. Now there is prosperity and now the children are being educated. Today, they no longer have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, and yoga is proud of that.

Australia 2004

Yoga and Samkhya

Satyananda Yoga Mangrove, 9–12 April



Spiritual Rebirth

Easter is a time for dying and then resurrection. Yoga is also about the death of the old self and resurrection of the new self. Symbolically, Good Friday and Easter Sunday represent death and resurrection. Historically, Jesus was crucified and after his death Christ was resurrected. In spiritual life, too, every individual has to die and take birth again on the spiritual journey. But what dies?

Jesus was born on earth as a person with a different vision and awareness. We all have aspirations and dreams which we pursue, but unfortunately they are material and self-centred in nature, and we do not look beyond that self-centred awareness. All our efforts, or *purushartha*, are to achieve a sense of contentment and fulfilment, which is sensorial, sensual, emotional, intellectual, and hardly spiritual. However, there comes a time in everyone's life when, in order to experience spiritual reality, the physical, sensorial, sensual, emotional and intellectual have to be left behind.

St John of the Cross said, "I swear by God I die every night." Sleep is considered to be the death of consciousness. Waking up the next day is a new birth, a new experience of consciousness. But in mystical or spiritual terms, the spirit is confined in the body. The spirit is unknown to us because we identify with the body, senses, expectations and desires, with our ignorance, and not with the spirit. Therefore, we remain alive to our senses, feelings, desires and expectations, and do not give our spirit the opportunity to wake up.

We have the ability to live in various dimensions at one time. We can live in the sensorial dimension, fulfilling our duties and obligations to our families and to ourselves. At the same time, we have the capacity to live in the spiritual dimension, in harmony and communion with nature. How do we attain that state of harmony and how do we realize that higher nature?

The word Christ is derived from the Greek word *christos*, meaning ‘anointed one’. In yoga it means *diksha*, one who has been initiated into the mysteries of life. Diksha comes from the Sanskrit root *drik*, which means ‘to see’. That person has the capacity to see the spiritual dimension of our nature, which is clouded and covered by the trappings of the mind, ego, desires, expectations, attachments, associations, dependencies, and so on.

Being initiated, or anointed, represents a movement from the material to the spiritual. Initiation represents an awareness that is evolving from the material to the spiritual. After death, the spirit, which was confined to the body, becomes free. When it becomes free, the spirit has its own will, or *sankalpa*, which is to experience the spiritual nature. The spirit experiencing its own nature is spirituality. In contrast, the spirit experiencing the bondage of the senses, mind and vrittis, and acting according to their influence, is the material nature.

The movement of awareness from material to spiritual makes the spirit free. This is seen in the life of Christ. He underwent both suffering and good times, but as long as he was in the body he was subject to the influence of the senses and the conditionings of the mind. In order to free the inner spirit, that person had to die. It is said that he died and was reborn after three days. These three days do not represent Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but the qualities of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa* that one has to transcend.

The conditioned nature

The tamasic nature is the conditioned nature of the self. The rajasic nature is the drive to attain something. The sattwic nature is contentment, fulfilment. If we are tamasic,

conditioned beings, we either enjoy that conditioning or we wish to overcome it. We continue to evolve around the tamasic conditioned nature. We are all subject to the tamasic nature. We want to change, but we resist change. We want to improve, but we resist improvement. It is a paradox. Tamas represents a pattern, a habit of the self from which it cannot extract itself.

Many years ago, when I was a young boy, I had some peculiar habits. So one day Swami Satyananda told me to pull out a tiny weed in the garden, which I was able to do with just two fingers. He then told me to pull out a medium size plant, which I was able to do with both hands and a lot of effort. He then told me to pull a tree out of the ground, which of course was impossible. Paramahamsaji then said to me, “Habits and conditioning are like that. In the beginning, if you are aware of a habit or a conditioning, you can easily pull it out with two fingers. If the habit takes root, you have to use your strength, but once a habit develops strong roots, there is no way you can uproot it. Even if you cut the tree down, the roots will still remain.”

This example indicates the conditioning of our life, mind and nature, and it is exactly what we have to learn to transform and transcend in yoga. If we cannot do this, then yoga has no meaning for us. Practising asanas will not lead anywhere except towards feeling good and light in the body. Some people imagine that whatever yoga they do is making them more and more spiritual, but it is only self-hypnosis. In yoga, all the practices we do, whether hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga or any other yoga, only raise the consciousness to a level where we can become aware of our nature and conditioning. We then have to work to overcome that conditioning and nature.

Resurrection of enlightened souls

We can see exactly this state of consciousness in the life of Christ. After the person known as Jesus was initiated, or anointed, he came into contact with that inner power, the spiritual energy, which gave him the understanding and realization of the oneness of the universe. The statement “I

and my father are one” is pure Vedanta. Jesus overcame the duality of life, identified with the higher self and became one with that higher self. When you become one with the higher self and there is no duality, that is the death and the resurrection.

Many people in this world have achieved that level of consciousness. Christ was one. After Christ, many other beings incarnated on this planet and lived lives of spiritual unity. One was Swami Sivananda. Paramahamsaji has said many times that we hear stories about Buddha, Rama, Krishna, Christ and other enlightened beings and avatars, but we have never seen them. However, after seeing Swami Sivananda, he became convinced that Rama, Krishna, Christ and Buddha all lived in this world as ordinary people with an enlightened state of mind.

Most of us have heard of Swami Sivananda, but we have not had the opportunity of seeing him or having his darshan. Let the experience of Swami Sivananda enlighten our path and inspire our sankalpa – to die and to be reborn. This Easter let us begin our journey to experience a spiritual birth so that we can at least come out of the womb of materialism and cry for spiritual realization.

Transformation of Consciousness

Our theme is the relationship between Samkhya and yoga. First, however, we need to go deeper into the topic of life and death. We have to understand that what is known as evolution of consciousness, or *mukti*, freeing oneself from the bondage of the senses, is actually a movement from conscious identification with the outside world to the spiritual dimension. When we are born in this body, we perceive ourselves, our environment and the world through the senses. The sole function of the senses is to associate with other objects around us.

Let us go back in time. We know that light is invisible and can only be perceived when it comes into contact with another object. When the object reflects the light, we can see the object and recognize that it is illuminated, but if there is no object, light cannot be seen. In the same manner, the functions of the senses, mind and consciousness happen at a subtle level and are invisible to the consciousness which is interacting in the world. Only when a connection has taken place between the senses and another object, whether sentient or insentient, an animal or another human being, the body, the family, the environment or the world, do we become aware of those objects. When we are aware of those objects and connected with them, the association gives birth to an experience which in yoga is known as *bhoga*. *Bhoga* means enjoyment, pleasure. The role of the senses, which are the motor of the body, is to give an experience of pleasure

when they are associated with an object. This pleasure, or bhoga, has to be harmonized.

The *Ishavasya Upanishad* begins with the mantra,

*Om poornamadah poornamidam poornaat poornamudachyate
Poornasya poornamaadaaya poornamevaavashishyate.*

Whether you multiply fullness by fullness, or divide fullness by fullness, or subtract fullness from fullness, or add fullness to fullness, the outcome is fullness. It is like multiplying zero by zero, dividing zero by zero, subtracting zero from zero, or adding zero to zero. The answer is always zero. This fullness becomes limited, finite, when the source of the fullness, the spirit, comes down into the physical realm of the senses.

Yoga, or any spiritual tradition, aims at reversing the process of awareness which at present is identifying with the senses and external objects. To experience the spiritual nature, the awareness has to be disassociated from the objects and redirected internally. The aim of yoga is experiencing the spiritual nature, which can be termed *samadhi*, *moksha*, *nirvana*, self-realization or final union with the higher self. However, the problem is that we tend to identify so much with objects that give us pleasure that we condition ourselves to think that we cannot live without them. This is the beginning of attachment, *asakti*.

Fear of disconnection

The association of the mind and senses with an external object creates attachment. Attachment is a strong magnetic force which holds the mind down to the experience of the pleasure we are searching for through the senses. There comes a time, however, when we suddenly find that all our attachments serve no purpose, because we realize that one day we will have to leave them. In yoga, that experience is known as *abhinivesha*, fear of death, fear of disconnection. The moment we realize we are going to be disconnected from our kith and kin, family and society, body and mind, and that we will cease to exist as we know ourselves to be, fear arises. Abhinivesha is the fear of not existing. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* abhinivesha has been

translated as fear of dying, but it is more than that; it is the fear of disconnection.

Fear of disconnection arises because we are tamasic by nature. Tamas has to be understood in the right perspective. Tamas is not bad or negative; it is a conditioned state of existence, a conditioned state of being. If you take a lump of clay and shape it into a pot, the clay takes that form and is identified as a pot, not as a lump of clay. When the identification becomes the tag, that is known as tamas. Tamas is the experience of identifying ourselves with our conditioned nature, and not being able to extract our awareness from that limited nature.

The quality of tamas expresses itself throughout life in the form of different psychological, social or religious conditionings. Tamas creates the belief patterns which we have to struggle to change, overcome or transcend as we develop. Tamas is not negative in itself, but negativity is an expression of this conditioning when change is rejected. Aggressive reaction to change is then identified as the negative outcome of tamasic conditioning.

Understanding the conditioned nature

The principles of Yoga, Tantra, Vedanta and Samkhya aim at understanding how we are conditioned. We are in tamas as long we are in this body, and we cannot live without tamas. Therefore, we need to understand the components of life and existence which interact with each other and take us through the various conditionings of tamas, then rajas, then sattwa. An understanding of this process helps us to free ourselves from the impressions that these conditions have created. The impressions created by the conditionings of tamas, rajas and sattwa are known as *samskaras*. Samskaras are an expression of the conditioned state of tamas, rajas and sattwa.

We have to work through the samskaras in pratyahara and dharana meditations before we can experience the higher levels of consciousness. In this process, yoga is the practical aspect and Samkhya is the theoretical aspect. Yoga

is influenced by Samkhya. Patanjali, who codified raja yoga, is considered to be not only an exponent of yoga, but also an exponent of the Samkhya tradition. In the past, there were eighteen schools of Samkhya. Just as yoga is popular today, Samkhya was once a popular system because it gave an understanding of how we become conditioned and how we can free ourselves from that conditioning.

Samkhya gives us an understanding of how the senses work and how the mental states interact with the senses, and of the nature, interplay and attributes of the gunas at an individual and cosmic level. It gives an understanding of the relationship between the mind, ego and higher intellect. Samkhya provides an understanding of the manifest, *vyakta*, and the unmanifest, *avyakta*, dimensions, and how, as human beings, our consciousness and mind interact in these various dimensions.

Manifestation of the potential of consciousness

Many scientists now believe that as much as ninety percent of the matter in the universe is dark matter and only ten percent is light matter. So from the scientific point of view this continuously expanding, visible universe is composed of dark matter and light matter. Samkhya, yoga and tantra have always discussed this subject, but using different terminology. The dark matter that science talks about is *moola prakriti*, the primordial energy, the primordial source, the primordial consciousness, in which everything is fused together like a seed. A seed has the potential to develop into a tree, but if you look at the seed, you cannot see the leaves, wood, flowers or fruits, although the potential exists.

The potential inherent in the seed is actualized when the conditions are right. If the seed is planted at the right time, then nourished and protected, in time the potential of the seed will be seen as a small sprout, which will eventually grow into a big tree. But if the conditions are not right, the seed's inherent potential will not manifest. In the same manner, *moola prakriti*, or the dark matter, contains the potential of creation and individual identity, *Prakriti*, as well as unified

awareness, God, *Purusha*. Everything is within it. The ten percent of light matter is the ever-expanding manifest universe, the created aspect that we experience through our body, senses, mind and ego.

This understanding is important because it creates awareness of another dimension of existence beyond the body. The material body is only one expression of the totality of life; insects, reptiles, birds and mammals all have bodies. All these different life forms are expressions of the cosmic energy known as moola prakriti, the original energy interacting in this world and taking different forms. When the form is dissolved, the association with the world of objects and senses is severed. Consciousness then becomes free to experience another dimension of life, to express itself in another dimension of existence. This is known as evolution.

In yoga, evolution is explained as the movement of consciousness from chakra to chakra. There are twenty-one chakras which are important in our life. At the human level there are seven, from mooladhara to sahasrara. Prior to the human level, there are seven chakras and beyond the human level, there are seven more. These twenty-one chakras indicate the progression and transformation of human consciousness, and the overcoming of the various conditionings which restrict our awareness and perception of other realities. At present, our perception and performance are limited and restricted. Despite knowing what is right, we often do the wrong thing.

Prior to the great Mahabharata war, Sri Krishna was speaking with the two parties, the Kauravas and the Pandavas, to try and reach a peace treaty. Duryodhana, the head of the Kauravas, said, "I know what is appropriate, right and just, but it has no attraction for me. I understand what is inappropriate, negative and detrimental, but I am attracted to it. I really do not know what makes me act in this unrighteous manner. Despite knowing what is right, I want to do the wrong thing. I cannot extract myself from this state." What Duryodhana said 5,500 years ago still holds true today.

Sri Krishna later explained to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* that we are unable to extract ourselves from our

conditioning because we identify with the drive and the search for sensorial, sensual, mental and emotional pleasure, which clouds wisdom. The senses, mind, emotions and ego all have their own gravitational pull. Depending on which aspect is stronger, we gravitate from one to another without any clear awareness of what the force is. When we confront an adversary, we identify with aggression, anger, hatred and jealousy. When we see a friend, we identify with the feeling of friendship, affection and love and the desire to be close to that friend. When we gravitate towards money, we identify with greed and possessiveness. Each association gives birth to a different conditioned state of mind.

Clearing the ground of the head and heart

The different systems of yoga provide techniques to sensitize our feelings and to transmute our awareness from gross to subtle levels, so that these conditionings can be recognized and rooted out. If a gardener wants to convert a barren piece of ground into a beautiful flower garden, first the ground must be cleared of rocks and weeds, then the soil prepared to ensure that nothing will restrict the growth of the seeds. Similarly, in yoga, we have to clear the ground of our head and heart of arrogance, avarice, greed, frustration, anger, depression, anxiety, fear and insecurity before a transformation of consciousness can be experienced. Trying to practise meditation with all this conditioning is like throwing seeds on top of unprepared ground and hoping they will come up. If we want to connect with our spirit, which is the ultimate aim of yoga, the ground has to be cleared first.

Therefore, yoga does not begin with meditation. First you must clear your mind and heart of aggression, frustration, tensions, anxieties, insecurities, phobias, hatred, jealousies, competitiveness and ego reactions. Yoga will flower in your life only when the ground is clear. The practices of yoga clear the mind and heart of the associations and attachments which do not allow the growth of consciousness and the liberation of energy. Awakening to our true nature is the aim of Samkhya and yoga. Samkhya gives the theoretical basis; yoga provides

the tools for disassociating the mind from the external senses, which opens our eyes internally and leads us from the search for pleasure to yoga, inner harmony, balance and awakening.

Two factors, disease and death, have influenced the quest for eternal life. If there were no disease or death, there would be no Samkhya, no yoga, no tantra, no philosophy of life. Disease and death have prompted generations of humanity to find a solution. Systems of therapy have developed to overcome disease, and spiritual philosophies have evolved to overcome death. Samkhya is the original philosophy of humanity to emerge prior to the existence of any religion or belief. Samkhya represents the drive to know the connection between the individual, the universe and God, the controller of life and death.

Purusha and Prakriti

Samkhya is the basis of the yogic tradition. One definition of Samkhya is that it enumerates the twenty-five components of existence, the building blocks of life, the elements of creation, as they have evolved from nothingness into existence. Another definition of Samkhya is total knowledge of the entire cosmos and how it is created. Samkhya comes from the roots *sam*, meaning ‘total’, and *khyā*, meaning ‘knowledge’, so *Samkhya* means ‘total knowledge’. That knowledge cannot come without the space of existence.

In the Upanishads there is the statement, “*Kham Brahman*,” space is Brahman, space is God. How can space be considered as God? The logical mind says it is not possible. However, it is the symbolic nature, the mystical nature of God or Ishwara that is seen in *kham*, space. Space is the container of everything, all the elements, possibilities and potentials. Without space, no element can exist, no life form can exist and no creation can take place. Space is the womb in which everything grows, generates and takes birth. It is known as *hiranyagarbha*, the golden womb.

In the ancient scriptures, the golden womb is the first identity of God, the first awareness of God. All the ancient scriptures speak of God as a feminine power, not as a masculine power, because of this concept. The entire created, visible universe emerges from that cosmic womb. The cosmic womb contains the potential to know everything – omniscience; the strength to create and destroy – omnipotence; and to be

present in the manifest as well as the unmanifest dimensions – omnipresence.

Kham or space has been associated with the power or force which we recognize as God, but which the tradition recognizes as Ishwara. In the *Yoga Sutras* Patanjali used the word Ishwara for the first time in the Samkhya tradition. *Ishwara* means the unchanging, eternal, constant principle. Ishwara is seen as power, force, shakti. When Ishwara is identified as something, as a being, an object, an idea, a concept, a body, mind, desire or emotion, when this potential is recognized as being independent and individual, it is known as *Purusha*, the higher consciousness. Purusha is consciousness confined in one body, in one object, consciousness separated from the original source. Purusha is the extension of the higher self in our personality and in our body.

The other important aspect is *Prakriti*, the force of action or creation. Although Purusha and Prakriti are identified as separate principles, they are one and the same, and work together to fulfil their roles in evolution. The relationship between Purusha and Prakriti, the so-called consciousness and energy, is like a muscle and its inherent strength; the strength only manifests when the muscle is used, otherwise it remains dormant.

Prakriti, the power, is at peace when it is in union with Purusha. The same concept exists in tantra, where Shakti, or energy, lies latent in mooladhara and Shiva, or consciousness, resides in sahasrara. The kundalini has to be awakened and the energy has to rise and be united with Shiva. Only when Shakti unites with Shiva in sahasrara does she become passive. It is the same in Samkhya. Prakriti emerges when a process needs to be undergone. Therefore, Prakriti is seen in two forms: as *avyakta* or *moola prakriti*, the primordial unmanifest cosmic soup in which everything is mixed, and as *vyakta*, the manifest form of Prakriti. *Moola* means ‘root’ and *adhara* means ‘support’, so mooladhara means the basic support. Moola prakriti means that too. It is the potential which can actualize itself but has not yet done so, like the

strength that is inherent in the muscles without expressing itself.

Birth of creation

Now, somewhere, something happens, and a transformation occurs in the transcendental field. Purusha and Prakriti separate and adopt different roles. Prakriti becomes responsible for creation, for actualization, for manifestation. The word Prakriti comes from the prefix *pra*, denoting intense action, and *kriti* meaning 'to perform'. Prakriti means performance over which there is no conscious control, like a runaway train which cannot be stopped or a speeding car without brakes. Prakriti is subject to time, space and object. It is under the influence of time; it is expressing itself in space; and its function is to create objects, life forms, to combine and permute the *tattwas* or elements, and give them form and shape. Different combinations and permutations of the elements give birth to different life forms. This is the function of Prakriti, the strength that is manifesting, or responsible for actualization and creation.

Purusha, on the other hand, is consciousness, the sentient nature. When that consciousness is confined in a form, it retains its essence, but now it has shrunk and become limited. You cannot hold the ocean in your hands, but you can hold pure drops of ocean water. The water in your hands has the same quality as ocean water, it is the essence of ocean water, but one you can hold and one you cannot. The expansive body of water is the ultimate Ishwara, the eternal unchanging principle, and the water you have scooped up in your hands is the Purusha, something you can hold, that this body holds. Therefore, Purusha is not one; we are all Purushas, so many containers holding that spiritual nature, that spiritual energy, that spirit. When this container is destroyed, the spirit merges with the cosmic spirit. Then, again, from Purusha we, the limited beings, become Ishwara, the unlimited transcendental self. This is the basic concept of Purusha and Prakriti that we hear about in Samkhya and also in yoga.

Manas – individual mind

Purusha is the sentient nature and Prakriti is the power of actualization. Purusha guides the movement of Prakriti. From the interplay of consciousness and energy, creation, manifestation, occurs. The first manifest forms of Prakriti in the physical universe are the three internal organs of knowledge: manas, buddhi and ahamkara.

Manas is the individual mind, the ability to think independently and not be dependent on the impressions of the higher self or higher consciousness. When one has the ability to think independently, a brooding, obsessive and analytical nature develops. If you see something beautiful, you want it and your thoughts revolve around it. The original thought gains in force and becomes more powerful. The obsessive nature of the thought flowers, and you are not happy just looking at it, but want to possess it. That is the component of manas. One thought or idea creates a cycle of desires from which you cannot extract yourself. In yoga this is known as obsession. It is so overpowering that all your energies and awareness gravitate towards it. When there is total identification with that particular thought or desire, that identification takes you to another dimension of experience, the birth of ego, *ahamkara*.

Role of desire

In the scriptures, it is stated that in the beginning God was alone, nothing existed. The thought arose, 'Let me become many.' According to Genesis, the first book of the Bible, for example, the universe was created by God's command over six days. The symbolism is interesting. The six days relate to the six chakras. On the first day God had to descend from his high loft in sahasrara to basic ground, ajna chakra. On the second day he had to create the container in which everything would be created, vishuddhi chakra. On the third day he created anahata, on the fourth day manipura, on the fifth day swadhisthana and on the sixth day mooladhara. It took him six days to come down to the level of mooladhara from sahasrara. On the seventh day God had finished his

work and he rested. These six dimensions represent an area of expression of consciousness. We are trying to go back to experience the transcendental nature. God had to come down from the transcendental to this level in order to fulfil the desire to multiply.

This example shows how the transcendental nature, when it had the desire, thought or idea to multiply and become many, had to come down to this manifest level in order to experience life. From the point of view of Samkhya, when the idea 'Let me become many' emerged, at that moment Prakriti emerged and became the force of creation, taking over the function of fulfilling the original desire. This original desire begins with procreation, with fear and insecurity, the desire for fulfilment, craving, rest and relaxation, movement, harmony between action and reaction. These are the four basic instincts controlling every form of creation, whether human, animal, reptile or bird. *Maithuna* is the desire for procreation. *Bhaya* is fear and insecurity. *Ahara* is the desire to satisfy and fulfil our needs. *Nidra* is not sleep, but trying to find a balance in our actions and reactions. Prakriti is the force which gives energy to these instincts.

In our yogic sadhana, what do we confront eventually? What is the sequence in our meditation practice? In the beginning, we deal with our mental expressions and behaviour; then we deal with our attitudes and aspirations, then with our weaknesses and strengths, then with our instincts and then with our ego. Then we attain realization. This is the sequence of meditation. We cannot hope to achieve realization without having dealt with the other components. It is like clearing the ground.

Buddhi – discrimination

So, from manas comes *ahamkara*, ego identity, self-identity, 'I exist'. First, there is a thought, an idea, a feeling, a desire. Second, there is a recognition of independent existence. The third outcome is *buddhi*. Buddhi comes from the root *bodha*, meaning 'to know' or 'to realize'. Buddhi is the process through which you know, the agency through which you

realize. When you have developed self-identity and know that you exist, then buddhi, that aspect of the self which recognizes its existence and discriminates, comes into being.

In order to maintain the continuity of existence, the first strength of buddhi is survival so that we do not lose our identity. That survival instinct is so ingrained in us, consciously or unconsciously, that we always react to threatening situations out of instinct. If something whizzes by, we simply duck without even looking to see what it was. We recognize a sound as a threat and instantly we act; we may not see the gun being fired, but the moment we hear the noise, we are flat on the ground. That is the survival instinct.

Elements of creation

So, according to Samkhya there are twenty-five stages in evolution. First is Purusha, representing the totality of consciousness beyond the manifest and unmanifest dimensions. Prakriti, primordial matter, comes next. By coming together, Purusha and Prakriti give birth to the twenty-three elements of existence in the manifest world, beginning with manas, buddhi and ahamkara, the three internal organs through which we can work in the realm of understanding and knowledge. The five *jnanendriyas* or organs of knowledge, the five *karmendriyas* or organs of action, the five *tanmatras* or subtle elements, and the five *mahabhootas* or gross elements then emerge. The three gunas, sattwa, rajas and tamas, interpenetrate these different elements which make up the created being. All forms of life possess these twenty-five elements. The role of yoga is to teach us how to manage each of the elements in our journey to the source.

Living Yoga to Experience Samkhya

Samkhya states that this body-mind mechanism is an evolute; it has evolved from *Prakriti*, the cosmic nature. The cosmic nature holds us in its power, and rules the manifest as well as the invisible dimensions of life. *Purusha*, the higher self, the supreme consciousness, the cosmic self, is a mute observer of the process of creation as it has been unfolded by *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* is the vehicle of *Purusha*, the pure consciousness which sees and knows.

It is like a blind person and a lame person travelling together. The blind person cannot see but can use his legs and the lame person cannot walk but can use his eyes. So the lame person sits on the blind person's shoulders and guides the way. The blind person follows the lame person's instructions, and in this way together they reach the desired destination. The blind person is *Prakriti*, nature, with the ability to act, perform and create, but not to analyze, understand or know.

The lame person is *Purusha*, the consciousness, which can see, think and plan, but does not have the ability to move. *Prakriti* is the vehicle of *Purusha*. Everything happens to please *Purusha*, because only *Purusha* can see what is happening. *Prakriti* creates, but *Purusha* observes. *Purusha* is immobile, eternal and constant, whereas *Prakriti* is changing, evolving, regressing, continuing and stopping. All created beings are the product of the interplay between *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, consciousness and energy.

Journey to the source

Consider the state of the universe before and after the big bang. All the gases, clouds and radiations intermingled with each other, giving birth to the different elements or *tattwas*, as described in the Samkhya tradition. From nothingness we came into this existence and our appearance has been nothing short of a miracle. We are the product of a miracle and the miracle does not end there. The sequence of miracles continues in our life, whereby we again realize the source of our existence. The discovery of the source is the spiritual journey. This is how the idea of spirituality developed. Connection with the source is the definition of spirituality.

That source is not influenced by the notion of time, space and object, or by our ideas and the imposition of thoughts. The source is known as the Self or God. This concept of God or divinity is not a religious concept; rather it indicates the transcendental nature which is responsible for performing this miracle of creating something out of nothing. A tree grows from a seed; life can emerge from a seed. The inherent potential in the seed develops into something much greater and more beautiful than it was originally. We have also grown from the seed of our parents. At conception our journey of life begins, in which all the instruments, the senses, mind and intelligence, the positive and negative aspects of life, come into play. The idea of just and unjust, right and wrong, develops, and we realize our nature, limitations, qualities and strengths. The Samkhya system enumerates the elements that we have to become aware of in our journey back to the source.

There are different approaches to achieve the source. Samkhya is the scale or ruler, and it can encompass the whole universe, manifest and unmanifest. The scale of Samkhya has twenty-five notches. One notch is Purusha, the second Prakriti, third buddhi, the fourth ahamkara, and in this way the system evolves. Samkhya enumerates the elements as they have evolved from nothingness into existence. It gives knowledge of creation, life and the subtle principles which influence our

behaviour patterns. Yoga is the way to experience Samkhya. The way to move through the twenty-five elements in the scale of Samkhya is the path of yoga.

Our current understanding of yoga is as a sequence of practices, whether it is raja yoga, hatha yoga or karma yoga. We think of yoga as a series of practices we can do, but yoga is also to be lived. You can do asanas, pranayamas, shat-karmas, or meditation, but you cannot live hatha yoga or meditation. What do you need? In order to live yoga, jnana yoga, expanding the horizons of the mind, and bhakti yoga have been given importance. Jnana yoga has been translated as the yoga of self-enquiry and bhakti yoga as the yoga of devotion, but these definitions are incorrect.

Jnana yoga

The primary class of jnana yoga is self-enquiry. The secondary class is no longer self-enquiry, but learning how to adjust to life and live with harmony between intellect and feelings. The intellect and the emotions are not parallel forces. One triggers off the other. When we respond to a situation, event or action, the emotions are already present before the intellect enters the picture. The participation of the emotions allows the intellect to come in and make a decision about what we wish to achieve. When the intellect is clear, it evokes another emotional response to further strengthen the motivation and drive to attain what we have set out to attain. So *buddhi*, intelligence, and *bhavana*, emotion, are not two tracks running parallel to each other. Therefore, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga have been identified as yogas that can be lived, because both intermingle and help each other. In secondary class, jnana yoga is a way of understanding life and living according to the laws of nature.

The third component of jnana yoga is immersing oneself in the identity of the spirit. The process does not just involve reading a book, liking a paragraph and making it our slogan for the rest of our life. It is a process of rediscovering wisdom and true understanding through meditation, reflection and contemplation.

Bhakti yoga

Bhakti yoga is the other important yoga. Bhakti is not the yoga of devotion, bhakti is purification. The twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* on bhakti yoga enumerates the characteristics of a true bhakta. How does a true devotee behave, act and live? A true bhakta is free from the pulls of the opposites. Who is free from the pulls of the two opposites? Singing kirtan, repeating mantras, blowing conches, following a religious path or involving oneself in worship and adoration are not mentioned. In verses 18–19, Krishna states,

*Samah shatrau cha mitre cha tathaa maanaapamaanayoh
Shitoshnasukhaduhksheshu samah sangavivarjitah.
Tulyanindaastutirmauni santushto yena kenachit
Aniketah sthiramatirbhaktimaanme priyo narah.*

One who is equipoised and balanced, who is unaffected by the pulls of the opposites, who can appreciate and understand the nature of heat and cold, pleasure and pain and not be subject to their influences, one who is at peace in conflicting situations, unaffected by praise and abuse, one who has controlled the senses and the ego, and is not subject to the space of the mind, one who is free from attachment and the sense of ownership, and is full of devotion for me, that person is a real bhakta and is dear to me.

Throughout the entire twelfth chapter on bhakti yoga, Krishna has only spoken of those qualities which are to be acquired in order to free oneself from tensions and frustrations. Praise and abuse create tension and influence our attitudes. Friendship, animosity, jealousy and love influence our attitudes and behaviour. It is impossible for such a person to come closer to the godly nature just by singing a mantra.

Just as asanas are a part of raja yoga, kirtan is a part of bhakti yoga, but not the whole of bhakti yoga. Just as pranayama is a part of raja yoga, mantra is a part of bhakti yoga, but not the whole of bhakti yoga. Just as pratyahara is a part of raja yoga, devotion is a part of bhakti yoga, but not

the whole of bhakti yoga. Just as dharana is a part of raja yoga, faith is a part of bhakti yoga, but not the whole of bhakti yoga. When we try to apply these different parts of bhakti yoga in our lives, they sensitize the heart and make it soft, full of love and compassion. A hard heart is full of greed, avarice, anger, jealousy, hatred and vice.

Cultivating a positive lifestyle

You cannot say you are devoted, or a bhakta, or a yogi when you are still unable to understand, guide and channel the expressions of negativity in your life. If you have practised meditation for thirty years and have not yet experienced peace, it means that your meditation has not been the right one. You did not feel a change because you focused on the practice, not on what you can become, on the lifestyle. The lifestyle combines the components of jnana yoga and bhakti yoga to cultivate the positive dimension and nurture the positive qualities in your life. There is no harm in spending a few minutes a day observing and analyzing what you did during the day with the aim of improving your performance next time.

When people ask how to handle their anger, it means they lack awareness; otherwise they would be analyzing their anger and finding different ways to deal with the same situation when it arises again. When you are driving a car and you know there is a hole in the road ahead, the first time you might hit the hole, but the next time you will try to avoid it. If you say you don't know how to avoid the hole, it means you are not a good driver and do not deserve to be driving the car. All you have to do is adjust.

Therefore, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga constitute the lifestyle component of yoga; they help in the discovery of the self. There will be connection with the qualities that uplift you and inspire you to walk in a new dimension of your life. This is the relationship between Samkhya and yoga. Samkhya gives an understanding of the nature of the different elements and evolutes of Prakriti, and yoga provides us with the solutions to realize the influences of these evolutes of nature and find our centre.

Living yoga

Samkhya is the map; yoga is the vehicle. You can navigate your car by observing the map of Samkhya. While you are driving, you have to become one with the car. A driver always has to feel the car, the power of the engine and the movement of the clutch, to know when to use the indicators, when to use the brakes. A driver can't just sit in the car like a passenger, because if the driver is unaware, an accident is bound to happen. However, if you are in tune with the car, then you will know beforehand if anything may go wrong; you will just feel it intuitively and make adjustments. So when you are in the car of yoga, practising yoga, you have to live yoga and tune yourself to the principles of yoga.

What are the principles of yoga? What does yoga desire from you? You may desire self-realization, but have you ever thought about what yoga desires from you? You may seek wellbeing, but have you ever thought about what yoga seeks from you? What yoga seeks from you is softening of the heart and mind. Soften the heart by living bhakti yoga, with awareness of how you interact with other people, with your family, your partner, your children, your friends, with society, with the world at large, in your profession, or in association with property and money. Money is related to your spiritual development, so observe the associations of greed, desire and ambition. Follow that thread of attachment and connection. If it is positive, cultivate it. If it is negative, try to transform it. That is bhakti yoga, the yoga by which you can eliminate negativity from your life and bring about a qualitative change to uplift your mind and to unite your consciousness with the higher mind.

Expanding one's connections

The birth of the union is bhakti yoga. How you express it is another matter. You may wish to light an incense stick and place a flower in front of your altar, but that is not bhakti. It is an act to focus your attention, to increase your faith or belief, however you may understand it. In reality bhakti is finding that balance where you are not subject to the influences of

the mind. When you are free, with the awareness fixed on the highest aspiration, when the ground has been cleared, then there is no question that faith evolves spontaneously. One does not need to learn how to develop bhakti; it evolves naturally. The evolution of bhakti is the outcome of expanding that feeling of compassion, love and sympathy for one and all. We have seen this in the life of Swami Satyananda.

If you put a drop of black ink into a cup of water, the water will become black. How can you make the water clear again without throwing it away? By adding a lot of water so that the blackness is diluted and merges with the clear water. Paramahamsaji gives us this example when he speaks about bhakti. He says that we are so self-centred that we live in a world the size of a cup. A frog living in a well will never be able to understand the perspective of a frog living in the ocean, because for the well frog, the entire world is the well. Similarly, our entire world consists of associations with those with whom we are intimately connected. We are closely connected with the members of our family, our self, our companion, our offspring, our parents, and that's it. There are close connections with a few people, but the feeling of oneness is not there. We see our reflection in our family, and that is our world.

See the family as a gurukul

The family unit is the area where our attachments, aspirations, ambitions and desires actually manifest. We have to look at the family as a gurukul. *Gurukul* means the community of the guru. In this community, there is always an effort, not just to live, but to understand something more each day. You live in a family, but you don't understand each other. Your partner doesn't understand your aspirations and you don't understand your partner's aspirations. Sometimes there is conflict, confusion, insecurity, fear, aggression and anxiety. You don't understand your children and they don't understand you. You live together, but you do not interact with the idea of coming together and developing a level of understanding and awareness in which you can appreciate

each other. You impose your own ideas on each other, and therefore there is strife in the family. Sometimes the strife is conscious, sometimes it is unconscious. Sometimes the current of tension becomes palpable, sometimes it is underground.

However, if you think of your family unit as a gurukul, as a place of learning and living that learning, then a house can become an ashram. The family becomes part of a tradition in which there is mutual support, sympathy, understanding, appreciation and knowing what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate. Think of the family as a community of beings who are helping each other to evolve and grow, and expand your attachments beyond the walls of your limited world. Today you will think for four, tomorrow you will think for five, the day after you will think for six and the day after that you will think for seven. As your areas of involvement with other people increase, your attachments decrease. As your areas of participation with other people increase, selflessness develops and selfishness decreases.

There comes a time when everyone becomes part of your family. We are not talking of the nuclear family, of isolated individuals, but of a family united in spirit with understanding for each other, with the drive to come forward in time of need and to share in each other's suffering and joy. That has been the teaching of Swami Satyananda.

Universal connection

Swami Satyananda has made it clear that after yoga, his path is now bhakti. Not bhakti in the sense of religious adoration and worship of images and forms of God according to the Indian tradition, or the Christian tradition, or any other tradition. The bhakti that he is teaching is to connect with the network of humanity. Right now you are connected to the family network. Rather than getting your supply from the local fuse box in the house, connect with the source of supply, so that you are connected to the entire grid. That is real bhakti, where you have developed your consciousness, awareness and sensitivity to such an extent that you become selfless. In this context selfless does not denote sacrifice, but

an understanding of each person's need and how you can help to fulfil that need and overcome the vacuum. This is seen as a lifestyle.

The practice of asana, pranayama, relaxation and meditation becomes much more powerful and takes on another meaning when one is able to live the lifestyle in which spiritual potentials are cultivated and developed. Fun and games are good, but at the same time there has to be a focused drive to realize what else one can do in life. This is the whole journey of Samkhya, yoga and bhakti yoga, as it has been taught in the tradition and as it is being taught by Swami Satyananda, by example.

Complete cycle

This journey leads to a beautiful flowering and unfoldment of human life in which we can realize the true nature of our existence. We realize the possibilities and the opportunities that we are given to grow every moment. We might have missed some chances, but opportunities present themselves before us day in and day out; we just have to keep our eyes open. These opportunities give us the strength to know that the future holds something auspicious for us. With this change of attitude, the world suddenly looks beautiful and inspiring.

Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram. *Satyam* is truth, *Shivam* is the auspicious nature and *Sundaram* is the underlying beauty that binds people together. It is also the nature of God desired by every individual. It is our aspiration to discover what is beautiful, truthful, auspicious and uplifting in life. In this manner we go around the whole circle, from Godhead to materialism and back to Godhead, from beauty to suffering and back to beauty and peace, and then our journey as a human being is complete. If we are reborn again, we come back as a *deva*, an illumined being.

Satsang 1

Swamiji, when you spoke of the universe being composed of ninety percent dark matter and ten percent light matter, does it mean that we, as humans, are ten percent light matter and ninety percent dark matter? How does this relate to consciousness and unconsciousness?

Ten percent of the dark matter is light matter, but we, who belong to this universe, are the light matter. Dark matter and light matter are cosmic phenomena and they represent the unmanifest and the manifest universe. We are part of the manifest universe, so we are the light matter.

Regarding consciousness and unconsciousness, a very large dimension of our nature is unknown to us. Even consciousness is unknown to us; we only know certain areas where we are able to focus. So, regardless of the label we give to the states of mental awareness, whether conscious, subconscious or unconscious, even in the realm of consciousness our span of awareness is limited and confined.

There is partial awareness of the illumined state of consciousness. When you enter this room, even though the entire room is illuminated, you only observe and notice where your eyes go. You don't look at the entire illuminated room; you only take in information about the area you are able to connect with through your senses, to perceive through your eyes, to connect with through sound, touch or smell. Even in this awakened, illumined state that we call consciousness, the area of our participation is minimal. We can even say that

ninety percent of our mental expressions and behaviours, inner behaviour and character, are unknown to us.

This understanding is indicated in the subject of kundalini yoga as well. In the symbology of the chakras, each chakra represents an area of knowledge, perception, understanding and behaviour. Where does our present consciousness stand in relation to the characteristics of each chakra? Maybe one person is in mooladhara, two are in swadhisthana, three in manipura, half in anahata, or a quarter in vishuddhi.

If you put a pin in a wheat field, what space will it cover? That is the space our awareness covers in the field of consciousness. We have to expand and develop that area. Meditation allows us to enlarge that area of perception and experience by observing and recognizing the behaviours of the mind, the behaviour of the subconscious and the unconscious. That is the aspect of becoming the *drashta*, the seer or the observer. So instead of thinking about where we are and how much we have to cover, let us be aware of our present and try to develop it for a harmonious future.

Can you please explain the process of initiation for a mantra and for a spiritual name?

In reality there is no process. Mantra is a vibration which helps smooth out the chinks in our personality. The spiritual name is a spiritual identity, and we identify with the name and try to cultivate the quality inherent in it. The only requirement is your sincerity and commitment, which has to be experienced not in the mind, but in the heart.

Taking initiation is not becoming a member of a club. Wearing robes and looking different is not an ambition to be pursued. If this ambition stems from the head, forget it, but if it comes from the heart, it will become an overwhelming force, an intense desire, a very powerful attraction, which will pull you to experience something different without you even noticing it. You will feel it not in the form of an idea or thought, but as a spontaneous drive and inclination.

If you are travelling a long distance by car and feel hungry, you automatically gravitate towards a restaurant.

Only when you need to stop and revive will you go to a place where you can recharge. When you feel refreshed, you can resume your journey. But you don't stop at every McDonalds you pass. You have to look at initiation in the same manner. When there is a need to stop, revive and resume, then you take initiation. When do you need to stop? When you recognize that you can improve the quality of your life and change the pace of your aspirations and ambitions, then you stop, rethink and re-evaluate, and then you can decide on the priority of your life.

When you reach the point of questioning what your need is now, at that time initiation into mantra and spiritual name must take place. Using the mantra and identifying with the spiritual quality inherent in you, given in the name, revives you, and then you can resume with greater confidence, clarity and awareness.

How does one integrate worldly life and spiritual life so there is a balance?

Can the theory of absolute balance ever be true? If there is absolute balance and harmony, then there is only contentment, which expresses itself in normal social life and in spiritual life as well. So if you are balanced, you don't need to find ways to adjust your material and spiritual life; it happens by itself. Unfortunately, however, it is not our nature to have perfect balance; it is always tilting to one side. Therefore, we have to rethink how we wish to experience wholeness and fulfilment, by deciding who is sixty percent and who is forty percent. This holds true in family life as well as in spiritual life.

For a positive relationship to develop between guru and disciple, the guru has to be sixty percent and the disciple forty percent. It cannot be fifty-fifty because you are not made from that stock. The substance from which you are made does not accept fifty-fifty. You have had your own quota of experience in this. It is like saying who wins, the immovable object or the immovable force? If they come together, who wins? Which is stronger? The immovable force and the immovable object are equally strong.

Something has to give in a relationship in which giving and taking, sharing and connection, are important. At one point, somebody must have the upper hand. When you give, you always have the upper hand. When you receive, your hand will be lower. Connect this with your life. It is necessary to have the ability to discriminate and to know when to have the upper hand and when to have the lower hand. The relationship always has to be sixty-forty. When it is sixty, you have the upper hand; when it is forty, you have the lower hand. Even in the family, if the relationship between a husband and wife or parents and children is to succeed and flower, a sixty-forty relationship has to develop.

Is Buddhist meditation, vipassana, or awareness meditation compatible with the Satyananda system?

It is not a question of the Satyananda system, or the Iyengar system, or this system or that system. Each system teaches a technique according to the knowledge, understanding and result that is expected. Vipassana belongs to the Buddhist tradition. Buddhism has its own aims, focus and teachings, otherwise it would not be called Buddhism. Buddhist practices were developed to enhance an understanding of the Buddhist tradition.

The theories of physics are different to the theories of chemistry. Each tradition, each belief, each philosophy has a direction in which it is moving, and often these directions and the aims they wish to achieve are not parallel to each other, not greater or lower than one another. Each system tries to develop an experience of the self according to the understanding it has gained through the efforts and *tapasya*, austerities, of the preceptor.

Buddha underwent a series of austerities and sadhanas, and the vipassana techniques are the outcome of his efforts to discover himself. Like Buddha, many people have made an effort, practised a sadhana or performed an austerity, which has been compatible with the times and society in which they lived. In Buddha's time the culture, society and character of the people were different from today. People had different

needs and their mentality and aspirations were different. Future generations will live in a different environment to our present one. In each period of time there will be an enlightened person who will devote himself or herself to the development of the spiritual science which is compatible with the times in which that person lives.

Swami Satyananda discovered and developed the techniques of yoga known as Satyananda Yoga, and they are relevant to today's time. Rather than comparing one system or technique with another, it needs to be understood that each one is developed to provide a particular aim and direction for the movement of our spiritual aspirations. This understanding is more important than thinking about whether a technique is compatible with another system or not, which just creates more confusion.

I am having visions of yantras. What is the underlying meaning of yantra? Do I need to do anything?

If you dream of yantras, it is a very good indication of the awakening of your mind. Yantras are symbols of consciousness. As the mind becomes sensitive and is not influenced by the sensorial bombardment that one experiences at night, these yantras surface and are seen in dreams. As a sadhana, you are free to draw the yantras that you see. Draw what you see, not what you imagine. You are free to draw them in your diary for a period of one to two years and then try to understand their symbolic meaning, what each yantra represents. Then try to see how that symbolic meaning relates to your perceptions, attitudes and thoughts, to the changes that you have brought upon yourself, and, in that way, develop an understanding of your psychic nature.

Spiritual life is uncharted territory. There is no person, book or scripture that can say if you see this, it means this, if you see that, it means that, because it will not be true. There are indications of what one may experience along the journey, but your experiences are unique to yourself, according to your mentality and your conscious spiritual evolution. Therefore, it is impossible for someone else to interpret anything that

you may see. You have to experience the change. If you are getting visual representations of yantras, then you have to use that awareness over a period of time to understand the value of the transformation you are undergoing.

If you go through this process and see me after a couple of years, then I may be able to help you, because there will be a document of your experiences which will indicate what you have felt, what you have seen, what has surfaced, what your behaviour, attitude and understanding have been. Therefore, in spiritual life, it is always said that the interaction and connection between the guru and the disciple, the practitioner, is important.

Can you describe the spirituality of Australia, particularly of the land itself and the indigenous people?

It goes without saying that the culture which developed in a country reflects the aspirations, ideals and understanding of that civilization. Of course, today there has been large scale migration and a massive merger of humanity has occurred, but if we go back in history and look at the cultures and civilizations that evolved in a particular area or land and what their beliefs were, then we can see progress and growth.

In Japan, the culture that developed was eventually identified as Shintoism, a connection with nature, spirits and ways of harmonizing human interactions at the physical, psychic and spiritual levels. In China, the culture and people evolved a particular philosophy, practice and lifestyle called Confucianism, which was compatible with the aspirations of that civilization. In India, the people, culture and land developed a particular philosophy, lifestyle, practice and attitude which we see in vedanta, tantra, yoga and sannyasa. In Africa also, various cultures and systems developed, involving paganism, natural living and worship of the elements and spiritual forces.

However, let us try to see it not from our perspective today, but through their eyes and understanding. The ancient civilizations of South America and North America developed their own system of expressing and realizing spirituality. In

Australia, the civilization that thrived once upon a time had its own particular systems which could commune with nature and the environment, and understand creation. What are known today as Dreamtime stories are myths, stories of actual events that took place once upon a time, just like the stories of Rama, Krishna and Buddha, but the events have been hidden by symbolical trappings which nobody can interpret today.

The desire to know the unknown has always fascinated humanity. This desire to discover the yet unknown has followed different waves in the ocean of knowledge. Each civilization has surfed its wave, and that is their own philosophy, belief and conviction, which is still alive in them today. This represents the spiritual drive, the desire to know who we are, from where we have come, our source, where we are going and what our role is in the scheme of the universe.

People who have tried to find the answers have become the gurus or wise people of each tradition and culture, and in their time have showed humanity the path on which to journey. One bulb does not illuminate the entire highway. The lights that illuminate the road are the so-called saints or avatars who have illuminated that period in the history of the civilization in which they lived.

Satsang 2

Can the notion of Samkhya operate without referring to God? You said God is space, but you also said God became lonely and wanted to multiply. Isn't this just man creating God in his own image with his own attachments, etc? What, besides space, is God? Is there good and bad before God? If God is the creator, why did she create the bad? And if Buddha was enlightened, why didn't he confirm the existence of God instead of emptiness?

To whom would Buddha have confirmed it? Many people before Buddha confirmed the existence of God, but were they believed? If Buddha had confirmed it, would you have believed him? The question has to be understood from a different perspective. My realization is my own and I cannot share it with you. In order for you to have the experience of realization, you have to make the effort. I was hungry, I prepared my food and ate it; I am fulfilled, contented and satisfied. How can I convey the feeling of fulfilment, satisfaction and contentment to you? God is not an intellectual concept. God cannot be described like chemicals, atoms or genes can be described. God is not something tangible.

Buddha was very sharp. He didn't waste time arguing with others about their notion of God, because he knew that they had their own understanding of what is right. Whatever he said would have turned into a discussion, because nobody would have been able to understand what he had experienced and realized, and if someone did have that ability, that person

would also be a Buddha. It is like a child asking Einstein to show him an atom. What will Einstein do? He will divert the child's attention from the atom to chocolate because he knows that the child is not mature enough to understand the intricate theories behind atomic principles. Buddha did that. Buddha was not an atheist. He only said that God should not be discussed because it is a personal experience, a personal realization. There is no need to confirm or deny the existence of God, because nobody can do it. If you deny the existence of God, you are wrong and if you confirm the existence of God, you are wrong.

After all, what is God? Is God a person sitting in heaven, watching us, weighing us on the scales of virtue and vice? If we are virtuous, we go to heaven; if we are under the influence of vice, we go to hell. Is the role of God to be a judge? Is God a person? Who is God? What is God to you? Everybody talks about God, but who has seen God? Therefore, it is not worthwhile looking at God as a human being.

God has to be seen as energy, as power. This power has three natures: the nature of creation, the nature of order, organization and maintenance, and the nature of change, destruction and transformation. The nature of this cosmic energy is known as GOD: 'G' for generation, 'O' for organization and 'D' for destruction. God is the power or energy which has the potential to express creativity, order and change. This power or energy is subtle. It cannot be felt by the senses, which are conditioned. It cannot be felt by the mind, which is conditioned. It cannot be realized with the awakening of consciousness, because initially one has to work through the conditionings of consciousness to become free.

How can the transcendental reality be understood by a non-transcendental mind? If you want to understand the transcendental reality, you need the proper equipment, which is a transcendental mind. You cannot deny the existence of the transcendental reality, just as you cannot deny the existence of radio waves in the atmosphere. Although you do not see them or hear them, you can pick them up with the right equipment and listen to whichever station you tune in to. You

have to apply the same process to yourselves. That is known as sadhana, tuning the mind, the brain and the energies so that they are in harmony, in synchronicity with the higher wavelength. The body and mind become the receptors, the instruments with which to hear the channel of God.

God can be realized in many ways. Mohammed heard the voice. Moses saw the form. Christ communed with God. There are different levels of experiencing that reality. Sometimes people hear voices, such as Joan of Arc, the prophet Mohammed and Swami Satyananda. Swami Satyananda has said that he can hear the voice and the instructions as clearly as he can hear you speaking. Then there are people who can see God in a form. Moses saw God in the form of a burning bush; the bush was on fire yet there was no smoke or ash. That is the vision of God.

Our misconceptions about God arise because we have read that God made us in his image, or we make God in our image. So we come to believe that he must have two legs, two arms, one head, two eyes, one nose, one mouth, and must be somebody like us. We make God not in our physical image, but in our emotional image, in the image of our feelings, and that is the source of our inner strength. When we are isolated or lonely, when we feel there is nothing in this world that we can call our own, then at that moment God becomes the source of strength, conviction and comfort, that we are not alone. There is somebody, something, some power, some energy, some force which will continue to guide, inspire and connect us with the positive and beautiful aspect of our life.

God is not a physical person. The spirit inherent in all of us is an extension of that godly nature. If you construct a house, you cannot stop the air from flowing into it, because air is all pervading. Similarly, God is all-pervading. The moment a form or shape is seen, the infinite becomes finite, contained and identifiable. That is the individual spirit which we all have. Sri Krishna states very clearly in the *Bhagavad Gita* that the individual spirit is an extension of the cosmic spirit. The individual spirit is bound by the senses, mind and ego, but the cosmic spirit is free from the senses, mind and ego. The

individual spirit is subject to the karmas of the body and the environment in which the body lives, functions and survives. The cosmic spirit, however, is not bound by object or time. Therefore, in yoga the concept of God has always been Ishwara. *Ishwara* means the non-decaying, non-changing principle, something which is eternal, continuous and constant. The reflection of that nature is in each one of us.

Now the question was, can the notion of Samkhya operate without referring to God? Let us forget about Samkhya. Can life be lived without referring to God? Those who understand the nature of life will know that life is not different to godly existence, that life is a creation of that power. In order to reach the roof of the building in which we live, we use a ladder. The same ladder is used to climb down, to climb up and again to climb down.

According to Samkhya, the seat of the transcendental nature is sahasrara. According to tantra, kundalini yoga and all the other beliefs, the dimension of God is the highest in our life, sahasrara chakra. The rungs of the ladder are the chakras. We have come down from that high place to this low place, and we have to use the same ladder to climb back up. So the effort is not in knowing God; the effort is in ensuring that we are able to climb the ladder. Forget about God. God will always come as a reference. Just as the spirit, mind or emotions are always being referred to. God is always being referred to. But God is not the priority. The priority in our life is the ability to climb up the rungs of the ladder. When you go up, then you understand the statement, 'My father and I are always one'. But as long as you are down below, looking at the ladder and wondering whether to go up or not, you will always feel that you and God are two different people.

Samkhya, Vedanta and other philosophies say that space is God. Space is one attribute, not the totality. Your legs, arms, eyes and ears constitute parts of your body, each with a different function to perform. The eyes cannot fulfil the function of the arms, the arms cannot fulfil the function of the ears, the ears cannot fulfil the function of the legs, yet

all these different organs constitute our body. In the same manner, space is one constituent of God. Space is considered to be God because it came first. Space is born first and matter is born last. The first-born always reflects the original nature from which it has come. Do not think that space is God; space is a constituent or an attribute of God.

We develop a relationship with God according to our feelings and understanding. In the *Ramayana*, it is said that when Rama entered the hall to marry Sita, the people present saw him in different ways. The arrogant kings saw Rama as their vanquisher, somebody who could overcome and rule them. The mothers saw Rama as their beautiful young child. The girls saw Rama as their boyfriend. The yogis saw Rama as the epitome of luminosity and peace. The yogis, the mothers, the girls and the arrogant kings all saw Rama through their own eyes. So who was correct?

We see and experience God according to our own perception, nature and need. If God comes to us today, we will see him in the form of a counsellor, not as God. As soon as he or she appears, we will say, "God, can you help me overcome my problems?" But if you can see God as God, then nothing will beat that. Our understanding of God depends on how well we are able to relate to God. In the individual, in the microcosmos, God is the spirit, the *atma*, the soul, which we have in this body. At the same time, the macrocosmic form of God is the power, the force.

If God did not create what is bad, how would you know what is good? Bad is not bad, it is only an understanding of good. If there were no vice in the world, we would not know what virtue is. If there were no suffering in the world, we would not know what wellbeing is. If there were no death in the world, we would not know what life is. Good and bad offset each other. The existence of one gives us an understanding of the other. This is a trick that God has played on us to make us aware of what is good in life. So don't reject or avoid what is bad, but try to understand it and the positive qualities it offsets.

What is the impact of receiving different initiations in different yoga paths?

When Swami Satyananda was young, he received a pair of trousers on his birthday. The trousers were slightly long, so he asked his mother to shorten them by two inches, but she was too busy in the kitchen. He asked his grandmother, but she was busy with her prayers. Then he asked the maid who said she would do it when she was free. After finishing her housework, the maid cut two inches off the trousers and sewed them up. After finishing her kitchen work, his mother did the same thing, and after her prayers, his grandmother also cut off another two inches. Later, when Paramahamsaji put the trousers on, he found they were six inches shorter! That happens in spiritual life too.

There has to be one aim, one aspiration, one mantra, one guru and one path. It is like digging fifty holes one-foot deep when you want to get water from the ground, instead of digging one hole fifty-foot deep. If you are happy and comfortable and the path suits your nature, then follow that path until the end, as far as it takes you. That will ensure that you come to the end of your journey. There is no harm in experimenting, but there has to be clarity of mind and direction.

Remember that no initiation is better than another. It is your conviction, commitment, dedication and sincerity which make the difference. Instead of worrying about initiation, you should think about how you can cultivate that sincerity, commitment and dedication, which is your strength and power. It does not matter whether a car is new or old; what matters is how you drive it, because each car has the ability to take you to your destination, provided you know how to handle it.

How do we know if we are on the right path?

Everything is a gamble in life. How do you know that you have found the right partner? Infatuation, passion or desire are not indications of having found the right person. Compatibility is the indication, and not temporary compatibility, but total

compatibility. In the same manner, each person has a nature and the path that you follow has to be compatible with your nature, your drive, motivation and inspiration. If it is compatible, it is the right one. If it goes against the grain of your nature, then it is the wrong one. It is as simple as that.

Why is the world in turmoil right now?

This is the nature of the world, and it is not the first time in history that it has been in turmoil. Wherever there is more than one human being, the world will always be in turmoil. But what does it matter? These problems and situations give us an understanding of how we can change to live a better life. They are opportunities and chances to improve ourselves, to know where the mistakes lie and to correct them. Therefore, turmoil, frustrations and situations that are detrimental to human beings and to human society should be seen as opportunities for improvement. In order to realize this paradox, sometimes you have to stand back and analyze your role and your participation in that crisis situation. Then you will discover the beauty that life has to offer.

What does it mean to take sannyasa in the Satyananda tradition? What is renounced? What is not renounced? And what is the purpose?

Once upon a time, sannyasa was the path of total renunciation, living in the mountains away from society, family or friends without distractions of any kind, doing sadhana to experience one's spiritual nature. Later, when sannyasins saw the problems that people in society were facing, they said that householders could also cultivate the attitude of sannyasa in their lives. Live in the world, but be detached from the world. If you get involved in the world, the world will possess you, but if you can remain in the world, yet be detached from it, you will be able to control the events that affect your life.

Sannyasa in society became a way of managing one's responses to the social conditions and environment. This management happens with *viveka*, discrimination. The component of *vairagya*, detachment, enables one to see the

value of something without needing to possess it. Attachment leads to possessiveness, and we are attached beings. We like to tie ourselves up in knots. We gravitate towards something and we get stuck. Sannyasa provides the awareness of how to remain detached while continuing to do what you have always been doing and maintain your peace of mind, tranquillity and balance.

Sannyasa is also a lifestyle; it is not monkhood. We don't become monks, we become sannyasins. The sankalpa of sannyasa lies in Shanti Path. *Asato maa sadgamaya* – lead me from the unreal to the real. *Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya* – lead me from darkness to light. *Mrityor maa amritam gamaya* – lead me from mortality to eternal life. These are the three aspirations of a sannyasin related to the self.

Then there are four aspirations related to other people. *Sarveshaam svastir bhavatu* – let there be wellbeing everywhere, and in order to bring about wellbeing, I have to work for it. *Sarveshaam shaantir bhavatu* – let there be peace everywhere, and in order to bring about peace, I have to work for it. *Sarveshaam poornam bhavatu* – let there be wholeness everywhere, and in order to bring about wholeness, I have to work for it. *Sarveshaam mangalam bhavatu* – let there be auspiciousness everywhere, and in order to bring about auspiciousness, I have to work for it. So three sankalpas are personal and four are universal.

Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda have carried forward the same tradition. Swami Sivananda used to say that if you want to take sannyasa, be ready to sacrifice yourself. Sannyasa is a life of sacrifice; it is not living out one's inner spiritual fantasies. When people take sannyasa, most think that they can live out their inner spiritual fantasies, and advertise that they have become saints overnight. The idea that Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda have infused into the sannyasa tradition gives a clear direction for self-development through sacrifice, service, compassion and love, and channelling one's energies to help other people. This form of sannyasa is more relevant today than the ancient form of total renunciation.

Will you please tell us again about the components of meditation?

Firstly, meditation is a process of removing stress from our personality. Meditation becomes a system and technique of stress management in which psychological and emotional frustrations are cleared. After that, meditation becomes a means of concentration, providing a focus for the mind. This concentration is so fine that there are no sensual distractions or dissipations to affect the state of concentration. The third component is internalization. Concentration is not internalization; it is just taking control of the runaway horses, holding the reins of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, and directing them to move on the path you have chosen. Internalization is the process of diving deep into the inner nature and discovering the building blocks of your personality, the samskaras, karmas, influences and impressions of your mental, psychological and emotional nature.

Fourthly, meditation is the way to connect with the positive self, the positive energy and the creative strength. When we connect with this positive energy and cultivate positive qualities in our life, then meditation takes us from the conditioned nature to *sattwa*, the luminous nature of the self. Meditation then helps us to overcome our ego connections; the individual self is transcended. After transcendence of individuality, *samadhi*, absolute harmony and balance, is experienced.

In the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna asks Krishna to describe how a realized person lives, acts, walks, talks, sleeps, eats and moves. Krishna says that a realized person moves, eats, sleeps and thinks like you and me. The only difference is that a realized person has overcome duality. Initially, we do everything for ourselves and become the centre of the universe, but for a realized person love and compassion have now become the centre of the universe and everyone else revolves around that. If we are able to understand this concept, it indicates the progression of meditation from anger, frustration and stress management to the development of self-awareness, to connecting with the positive nature

and discovering peace and harmony in our life, to living a complete life by not connecting with ourselves but with the world around us.

That is the relevance of meditation today. Self-realization is a far-fetched reality, attainable but not necessarily needed. What is needed is the ability to manage and handle ourselves in a better way. Let us start with that. If we can learn how to handle ourselves, maybe we will discover that we do not need to be realized, that we are in that state of realization all the time.

Satsang 3

Can we make contact with those who have passed through death's doorway?

There are stories of people who use a board with signs and letters of the alphabet on it and say they can contact departed spirits in this way. Maybe they do, maybe they don't. Being involved with yoga I know that communication with the dead is not really possible. How will we communicate with them? Through speech, through the language we understand, through the mind, through the brain, through logic?

The disembodied soul has no agency through which it can speak, no mouth, no other instrument of communication; it is in a different level of existence altogether. At one point in life, in meditation, it becomes possible to have a glimpse of that dimension. I have travelled in that dimension, but if you ask me to describe it, I can't. Although the memories and images are vivid, I cannot put that experience into words. It is a non-verbal dimension, where communication happens at an intuitive level.

This life and the life after death represent two states of consciousness which are totally different and opposite to each other. Take, for example, the waking state and the sleeping state. Are you aware of yourself when you are asleep just as you are when you are awake? Are you aware of time, space and object when you are asleep just as you are at present? No. Your mind, awareness and interaction with time and space change. Similarly, in life after death, the state of consciousness

is totally opposite to what we have now. Sleep is also regarded as death. Death is only disassociation of consciousness from the senses.

In a morgue, the dead bodies can be seen lying absolutely inert, like lumps of physical matter. A few days before they were alive, breathing, eating, drinking, but now the spark has gone. What is that spark? Physically, it is prana and at another level it is spirit. If we were somehow able to inject prana into an inert body, it would come back to life. Whether you call the missing component breath, prana, consciousness, energy or spirit, they are all different terms for only one thing – life. Prana is life, breath is life, consciousness is life, spirit is life. The life which is absent in the dead body in the form of spirit cannot be accessed. But then again the state of consciousness at the time of death determines the nature and quality of consciousness. If a particular desire, aspiration or attachment has influenced the mind, then the consciousness will respond to that desire.

Before he died, the famous magician Houdini, who attributed all his feats to natural, physical effects, said that he would indicate if there was life after death by communicating a message to his wife, if possible, within ten years, but no message was ever received. However, we can understand that there is life after death, because yogis have lived it. In Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, it is related that when his guru, Sri Yukteshwar, left his body in Calcutta, the same night he appeared in a flesh and blood body in front of Yogananda, who was staying in a hotel in Bombay. From our perspective, we may call that a *siddhi*, a psychic power, the ability to do something miraculous, because we do not understand the intricate mechanism of life. But from their perspective, people who have attained a degree of realization and the ability to control their pranas, body, mind and senses can, in one form or another, communicate at will with those who are still living. The living cannot, but the dead can.

The water from a river may be sweet, but when it merges with the ocean, it loses its identity. So someone who was

known to you as Tom or Niranjana while he was alive, after death becomes one with the universal spirit. If you try to communicate with his departed soul as Tom or Niranjana, who was once identified with the body but has now lost that individuality and is one with the cosmic spirit, he will not come, because that spirit has no association with you. Your association with a person is due to attachment because of a desire to be happy. We love our parents because we are insecure. We love God because we are insecure; if we were secure, we would not need to search for God. In the same manner, our expectation of other people is to fulfil our personal need and to strengthen the connection of attachment. A rope cannot bind air; it can only bind something which is physical in nature. Attachments can only bind those things which have a physical, mental and emotional component.

We see this in the lives of gurus. Our association begins with a relationship and an attachment, but as the guru matures in his own sadhana and conditioning, that attachment is transformed into unconditioned compassion and love. When we see that unconditioned compassion and love being shared with everyone, we feel it and wonder why we are no longer best friends. Therefore, if you try to pull somebody down from that dimension because of your attachment, you will see a communication not from the spirit, but from your inner mind which is responding to the feeling and intensity of attachment. The spirit is supposed to be free. Death leads to freedom from this experience of the body. The universe is vast – and here you are sitting with your board, trying desperately to call a departed soul. That is a projection of your inner mind.

The inner mind is very tricky; it can create images from nothing. When you see a rope lying on the road at night, you think it is a snake and feel afraid. That is a creation of the mind. Why didn't the mind let you know the reality? Why did the image of the snake arise? Why did that projection occur? The mind can create something out of nothing, and that creation is always in relation to oneself, one's attachments, expectations or beliefs. When you try to communicate

with departed souls, it is your mind responding to your attachment to them. In accordance with the yogic and spiritual tradition, it is believed to be not only inappropriate but also impossible to interact with forces and powers which cannot be harnessed by the human brain or mind. We do not have that capacity or potential.

This question is on meditation and pain management. It has been found that when the mind stays with sensory awareness and does not go into cause and effect thinking, significant pain relief can be experienced. Does this sensory mind relate to manas and the existence of 'I', ahamkara, but not buddhi, cause and effect thinking?

Meditation is a process of harmonizing the mental activities. In yoga, the mind has been identified as having five different modes of expression: dormant, dissipated, disturbed, one-pointed and controlled. Meditation is a process that leads the dissipated mind to a state of control and harmony.

In this process, obsessive thinking is eliminated. If there is pain and suffering, we identify with it. Our thoughts continue to revolve around that experience, creating a vicious circle of identifying with the physical or psychological, inner or outer happiness and suffering, either accepting or rejecting, wanting or not wanting. *Raga*, acceptance, desire and wanting, and *dvesha*, rejection, repulsion and not wanting, create dissipation in the mental structure. If you want to possess something desperately, you will feel that sense of desperation inside and it will ensure that your thoughts and awareness will continually focus on the object of your desire. Being obsessed with *raga*, pleasurable conditions, and *dvesha*, painful conditions, thinking about them day in and day out, leads to dissipation of the mental forces. In meditation, the moment you concentrate and take your mind away from that experience, the pain disappears because the mind is not there any more.

Pain will exist as long as you identify with it, and it will disappear when your attention moves to something else. This happens in meditation, because meditation attempts to take

the mind away from its area of involvement and place it in another state where it can experience peace and tranquillity. So, whether it is pain management, anger management or stress management, it will happen naturally. You are not managing these states; you are managing your mind, your perceptions and attention, and giving them a new focus and area with which to connect. That is meditation. Whether it corresponds to *manas* or *buddhi* is irrelevant, because *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara* are only different shades of the same colour – grey. They are seen as shades because of their functions and roles. *Ahamkara*, ego, the self-oriented awareness is the last component one has to transcend.

The first component one has to overcome is *manas*, continuous thinking, day in and day out. Certain yogic practices, such as *pratyahara* and *dharana* techniques and mantra, help to overcome this continuous thinking process. *Manas* is known as the manifest mind, but that is only a translation. The word *manas* comes from the word *manana*, which means ‘to brood’. *Manas* is the aspect of our nature which broods and continuously thinks about something. It is the first rung of the ladder we have to climb and manage with the practices of *pratyahara* and *dharana*.

The second rung is *buddhi*, intelligence. *Buddhi* has to be seen in two forms, *sattwic* and *tamasic*. The *sattwic* *buddhi* is wisdom, excellence, competence and understanding. The *tamasic* *buddhi* is incompetence, ignorance, rash and inconsiderate actions. In meditation this is the second rung that we have to manage through the cultivation of *viveka*, discrimination.

The third rung which has to be managed is *chitta*, the total experience of *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahamkara*. What is the relationship or interaction between *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahamkara*? What is gained or retained from the impressions or memories of that interaction? That is *chitta*, the storehouse of the impressions or *samskaras*. One component of *chitta* is memory. In the *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali describes five components of *chitta*: *pramana*, cognition; *viparyaya*, false knowledge; *vikalpa*, confusion; *nidra*, sleep; and *smriti*, memory. *Smriti*

is the main consequence of chitta. It is not only intellectual memory, but also the samskaras.

If somebody pinches you, the pain is a memory. The smell of a beautiful flower is a memory. If somebody abuses you, the abuse becomes a memory. If somebody loves you, love becomes a memory. The pleasant view you see from a mountaintop becomes a memory. You go for a swim and the temperature of the water becomes a memory. There are also memories that we have carried forward from our previous incarnations. When these memories and samskaras become latent subtle impressions, *vasanas*, they become a person's character.

The most important aspect of pratyahara meditation is cleansing these memories. In the practice of yoga nidra, sometimes you are instructed to revive the memory of heaviness and lightness, pain and pleasure, or heat and cold in order to bring them out. You have to clear the memories because they become a person's character when they are latent. When they are on the surface, there is no problem, but if they take root, they become a character. Therefore, *smriti* or memory has been defined as a *vritti*, and memory is the main consequence of chitta.

In the fourth rung, we learn to manage our ego expressions. Ego is not always bad. Ego is a force, an identity. A child identifies so strongly with a plastic toy car that if the door comes off, it affects the child's behaviour and he begins to cry. But if you have a toy car and it breaks, you will not be affected, because as you grow older your identification is transferred to a bigger car. If there is a dent in your car, you think of the five hundred dollars needed to repair it, but a child will not think like that. We identify with our memories in different ways and with our ego in different ways.

Meditation is a process of recognizing the different types of identification with the self, of knowing and identifying the different ways of communicating and interacting with the self. Therefore, it is inappropriate to say that meditation helps to overcome the sensory mind, or *manas*, *buddhi* or *ahamkara*. Meditation is a process which helps us to find

that inner balance where the purity and energy of life can be experienced.

Can you comment on Krishna, and what it means when it is said that he is the symbol of the Godhead?

Krishna was a good person. He did many things that we would all want to do. He came with a mission to establish dharma, just as Christ and Buddha came with missions to establish *dharma*, righteous acting, righteous living and righteous thinking. Christ brought about change through a philosophy. Krishna brought about change through social transformation. In Christ's time, the prevalent thinking was crooked and he had to put that right. In Krishna's time, society was crooked and he had to fix that. Christ and Krishna had different roles to play in each age.

Krishna is considered by many to be the ultimate symbol of the Godhead. Possibly they are right, but for me, Krishna was a man with a vision, and he worked to realize his vision. When you work to realize your vision, you gain inner strength. Depending on the intensity, that inner strength can either make you an avatar, a siddha or a master. After all, for the sake of discussion, what is the difference between Krishna, Ramana Maharshi, Christ, Buddha and Swami Sivananda? Except that they lived in different ages and circumstances, their aspirations were the same. Krishna did the same thing that Swami Sivananda did for us, that Ramana Maharshi, or Christ, or Mohammed did for human society. He gave the same message, but the circumstances were different. Christ gave a sermon on a mountain. Krishna gave a sermon on a battlefield. Both spoke of the same thing. Christ said to identify with the cosmic father. Krishna said to identify with the cosmic nature.

If you are thinking of the times and circumstances in which they lived, then it is another story. But if you think of the aspirations they had for human society, how to bring those changes into our lives and direct the movement of human civilization towards divinity, then the teachings are the same. One is according to one mentality, the other according to

another mentality. In fact, when Krishna was born, he was the instigator of a civil war. He had accrued a lot of karma, and the only way he could exhaust his karma was to crucify himself in the form of Christ. It is as simple as that. So although Krishna and Christ lived in two different times and civilizations, karmically and spiritually they are one and the same.

What is the essence of the Bihar/Satyananda system of yoga that yoga teachers need to embody for their students?

Most schools which teach the physical component of yoga, such as asana, follow the ‘feel-good’ method. You stretch your body and you feel good, feel loose and light, and say, “Yoga has really helped me.” This feel-good factor is superficial, and we do not subscribe to it because we feel that the body can influence the mind.

In the early days, when Swami Satyananda began teaching yoga and training yoga teachers, he would say that when you practise an asana, do not identify with the body. In the initial stage, become aware of annamaya kosha – the motion of the body, the twisting and turning. When you have developed an awareness of how the body responds to the asanas and movements under your command, become aware of pranamaya kosha.

If you are practising surya namaskara, in the first stage it is an exercise – backward bending, forward bending, stretching, contracting, etc. Then the practice connects with the body and an awareness has to develop in which you are able to see the whole body being involved in the asana, from the tips of the fingers to the toes. You have to visualize, to see yourself practising the perfect posture before you actually attempt it. While doing this, also experience the stiffness, aches and pains. Visualize these first. Then, when you perform the posture, you will find that something gives. If you cannot touch your toes today, after a week something will give, your muscles will relax and you will be able to touch your toes. That is the connection with annamaya kosha. To harmonize annamaya kosha, to prepare the body, visualize first, and practise thereafter.

Before starting your class or practice, say, “I am going to do twelve rounds of surya namaskara now.” Sit down for a few moments in a meditative state and see yourself practising surya namaskara. Feel the same stretch and contraction of the body and muscles as you would if you were actually doing it. After you have gone through the asana mentally, do the asana physically. You will find that your body is responding differently and performing better.

When you are in control of the body, then move to the next dimension, which is prana. During the visualization before the asana practice, you will see the movement of prana in your body. Visualize your body as transparent and see the prana moving through the body. If there is stiffness or pain, the prana will be blocked in that particular area. When you are able to see the prana moving unhampered through the body, then begin your asana practice.

Your mind is now connecting with something subtler than the physical. Go through this stage for some time, then move to manomaya kosha. Identify your mental state when you begin your yoga practice. Are you relaxed, peaceful, tense or disturbed? Then, in your mind work with ida and pingala. If you are tense or agitated, before practising asana close your eyes and try to activate the ida principle, not through pranayama, but through willpower. If you are feeling lethargic, activate pingala. Be aware of the mental states and energies and try to balance them out before doing the asana, or any yogic practice.

As yoga teachers, also make a chart for yourself of your strengths and weaknesses, needs and ambitions. Be thoughtful: write down all the attributes that you consider to be your strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. Each time you practise yoga, have the thought or idea in your mind: “This is the weakness I want to overcome, and this is the strength I want to cultivate. This ambition is only my fantasy and I will work to achieve this need.” Define the priorities in your mind in relation to your personality and your requirements, to better the quality of your life. This is how a sankalpa arises.

If you practise yoga with a sankalpa to increase your willpower, for example, even asanas, pranayamas, mudras and

bandhas will help you to achieve it, to develop the strength and the quality that you are looking for. They will also help to overcome the weaknesses and shortcomings and manage the ambitions and needs.

At each level of practice you need to have a focus and go step by step. Firstly, annamaya awareness to remove the physical blocks from the body such as stiffness and tiredness. Secondly, pranamaya awareness to regenerate the different organs with prana. Thirdly, manomaya awareness to balance and harmonize the mind with the body. Fourthly, vijñanamaya awareness to recognize the strengths and weaknesses, and how to overcome the weaknesses and develop strength of character and mind. If you can first experience yoga in this manner in your own practice and see the benefits, and thereafter teach this process to other people, they will gain much more from yoga than is normally possible in a physical class.

Swami Satyananda has emphasized subtle awareness in our yoga practice. This is the main difference between the Satyananda system and other systems of yoga. The body is used to access the mind. Prana is used to access the consciousness. The whole of yoga is used to access inner spiritual harmony and balance.

Mallorca

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Spontaneous Yogic Living

Campos, 20–23 May

University of Balearic Isles

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Spontaneous Yogic Living

Our purpose is to experience spontaneous yogic living. We lack spontaneity and when we think of becoming spontaneous, it goes against the grain. As human beings, we think with the mind, and the nature and experience of the mind comes from our conditioning. If we put on dark glasses, everything looks dark; if we put on red glasses, everything looks red. We perceive the world according to whatever colour we put in front of our eyes. The mind is also coloured and conditioned, and our responses to the world are a result of that conditioning. So when we try to become spontaneous, we immediately think we will have to go against the conditioning of the mind. We believe that we need to overcome our conditioning before we can live spontaneously. But spontaneous living does not mean going against our mental conditioning. Our thoughts, ideas and understanding happen at the intellectual level. At this level we become aware of the conditionings or habits that direct our actions, thoughts and behaviour.

It is impossible to get rid of a conditioning or habit. We also make this mistake when we take up yoga, because we try to change ourselves overnight, to experience a state of peaceful enlightenment overnight. Again we condition ourselves, and in the course of time this conditioning becomes powerful. Yoga says that the conditionings and habits need to be changed little by little. If you remove the letter 'h' from the word 'habit', 'a bit' remains. You remove the 'a' and 'bit'

remains. Remove the 'b' and 'it' remains. Remove the 'i' then 't' remains. No matter what we do, something always remains, and it is that something which has to be understood, changed and transformed.

Transforming what remains is the ultimate aim of yoga. When we try to transform it, we have to bypass the mind and connect with a different energy, a different source of experience. That source is not mental or intellectual but belongs to the heart. Don't try to analyze the expressions of the heart with the mind because you will fail. When you are in love with somebody, you say, "I fell in love." You are trying to translate a feeling from the heart with your mind and therefore you 'fall'. In reality, you should be saying you 'rose' in love! Whenever we try to understand an experience of the heart through our intellect, we always fail. Why does that happen when we are the same person, with the same thoughts and emotions? Why is there this difference in understanding the heart experience and the mind experience? There is only one way to explain it. We walk on land, but we cannot walk on water. We swim in water, but we cannot swim on land. The earth element evokes a different response from the senses and the body. In the earth element we have to walk upright, but in the water element we become horizontal.

It is the same with the mind and the heart; they are two different elements. If the mind is matter, the heart is water. In the mind we walk upright; in the heart we are flat. Whenever we try to understand our heart through the mind, there will be confusion and possibly conflict. How are compassion or love defined? It is something that we feel, but cannot translate into words, and that feeling also fulfils us. But the moment we try to define that overpowering sentiment, words become insufficient. This means that our mental and heart experiences are different. When people try to connect with their heart, they lose their balance. They say, "I love you," but they do not even know how to express their love. The feeling of love is overpowered by possessiveness, jealousy, anger, insecurity and fear. The feeling that initially inspired us is now lost under the cover of fear and insecurity.

Connecting, disconnecting and reconnecting

What we need to attempt now is to differentiate between the mind experience and the heart experience, and to understand them separately. In spiritual life, we have to disconnect from the mind and connect with the heart. This disconnection is not rejection of the mental expressions, but understanding how the mind influences the heart and knowing how to separate the two. Understanding, awareness and observation come first. This is the process of meditation explained in yoga. Disconnection of the mind from the heart is defined in the states of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. However, there is a trick here.

As yoga practitioners, you have been exposed to the practices of pratyahara. Take the example of antar mouna, the practice of inner silence. Initially you are guided to become aware and observe the thoughts that come spontaneously and naturally. Then you pick one thought and go to the source of the thought. When you discover the source, the dissipation stops and you experience mental stillness. For many people this would be the final state, and they would say, “I have disconnected from my thoughts and I am at peace with myself.” But there comes another stage where we create and connect with another thought. We continue to create thoughts; there is no state of thoughtlessness.

In this process we see that the things which create distractions and dissipation initially have to be observed and understood. You have to try to find a balance where the distractions do not affect you. Once you have found that balance, you again link yourself with the experiences arising in the mind. It is like coming back from the outside and then going out again from the inside – reconnecting. The senses govern us and are the cause of tension and confusion. We observe them, become aware of them, and try to smooth their ruffled feathers by withdrawing from them for a little while, and then we reconnect with them again in a more positive and creative way.

Apply the same principle to emotions, too. Connect with the feeling of love. Observe the problems that the feeling creates. Observe your responses and reactions to that particular

feeling. Withdraw from love and then again reconnect with love, and you will find that the quality of love changes. If you do the same with your thoughts, the quality of the thoughts will change. In this way, yoga becomes the process of returning from the present experience to find your balance inside and then again reconnecting with that experience. Yoga is not isolating oneself from the experiences of life, but connecting with them more deeply, optimistically and creatively. When we begin to live by reconnecting with greater clarity and understanding, life becomes spontaneous.

Unity

This has happened in Swami Satyananda's life. During all the years that he worked for the development of yoga, he did not involve any other concept. Then he retired from yoga and went into total seclusion. When he again connected with yoga, he gave a different dimension to the experience of yoga. Now yoga is not confined to the practices of asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, yoga nidra and meditation. Yoga has a different meaning, at least for those of us who have seen it happen. Yoga can unite the individual in such a way that the human being can become a superhuman being.

It is very difficult to convey this idea of unity, but if you have studied unified field theory, you will understand. The body has different systems and organs, all of which have their roles to play. Each one is unique, but at the same time they are all functioning in harmony with each other. The eyes do not smell, they see; the ears do not eat, they hear; the nose does not see, it smells. Each part has its own function, including the heart, liver, lungs, kidneys and intestines, yet they function in harmony with each other. If one goes off track, the entire body collapses. Health means that these physical organs and systems work in perfect harmony with each other.

The body also contains the brain, mind, energy, prana and consciousness. If one of them collapses, there is a crisis. The mind and emotions have to function in harmony with the other energies that govern the body and life. Understanding their behaviour and relationship with each other

is the beginning of yoga. For example, if there is pain in the leg, who is feeling that pain? The leg, the mind, the brain, the spirit? They are all interconnected processes. The pain we feel in the leg is also felt in the brain, mind, emotions and energy structure. Our body is a unified field, and just as a mosquito bite can affect our mind, what happens to this planet also affects the universe. If the planet blows up, the universe will be affected and will feel the pain. If the moon is pushed out of orbit, the universe will be affected and the balance will be lost. We are all part of this unified field, whether human beings, animals, insects, planets or stars. From our microcosmic experience to our macrocosmic experience, we are all one. However, in order to know we are one, we have to go through a lengthy process of self-understanding. Though the oceans are wide and the mountains divide, we are still united in energy and consciousness.

Individual understanding and experiencing harmony indicates the beginning of the yogic process. But it is a long journey, a journey of many lives. Distractions are abundant in our nature. If we can be focused, if we can make the effort, then definitely within one lifetime we can achieve it. Many people have done it, and who knows, you might be one of them too!

Connecting with the Heart

It is said that in the sevenfold path of Swami Sivananda, the closest experience of the real heart is bhakti yoga.

Many people think that bhakti yoga is the yoga of devotion, but it is not. Raja yoga, for example, is known as the yoga of managing the mind, jnana yoga as the yoga of managing the intellect and karma yoga as the yoga of managing one's day-to-day actions. In this context, bhakti yoga means managing one's emotions. Emotions are raw energy over which one has no control. Emotion means energy in motion, e-motion.

Anger arises with such force that it cannot be controlled and you just explode. Frustration is so strong a feeling that it possesses you. Fear is so powerful that you cannot overcome it. Love is sometimes so powerful that you are blind to other realities. Hatred can be so powerful that you lose your balance. Greed is so powerful that you don't know whether you have done the right or the wrong thing. These energies belong to the realm of the heart and cannot be controlled by the mind. Remember that logic will always fail. You know that being angry is not good, but when you feel angry, where does the knowledge go? Knowledge and logic fail when they confront that raw emotion and energy.

Whatever this energy connects with will evoke a different response in the mind. If this emotional energy connects with a pile of money, it will evoke the response of greed. If it connects with an adversary, it will evoke animosity. If it connects with an object of pleasure, it will evoke passion. There is one energy,

but as it connects with different situations and objects, it will evoke a different conditioning of mind. When you identify with children, the emotion will be affection. When you identify with your lover, the emotion will be passion. When you associate with a competitor, the emotion will be envy. When you see somebody who represents what you cannot be, the emotion will be jealousy. When the same emotion is directed inwards, towards the source of the self, it is known as *bhakti*. The same emotion which is manifesting externally as greed, jealousy, envy, passion or affection, when directed internally towards discovering the self is *bhakti*. *Bhakti yoga* is a system of managing and redirecting the emotion which at present is flowing through our senses in the outer dimension.

Raja yoga has eight limbs. *Bhakti yoga* has nine limbs or stages. The first stage or requirement of *bhakti* is *satsang*, developing identification with truth, the reality that surrounds us. *Satsang* means coming closer to truth, to be in association with truth. *Sat* means 'truth', *sang* means 'in proximity to'. In order to know the truth, we have to apply the mind as well. When we cannot control raw emotion, we attack it from different sides, including the mind and the intellect, the senses and sensorial perceptions. We have to be aware of the sensory experiences, because sometimes the senses can create false notions of objects or events. So the first form of *bhakti* is realized in association with truth.

Association with truth means removing the masks we put on every day of our lives. We never present ourselves to others as we really are, we always wear a mask. People who are very weak inside project themselves as bullies. If you observe yourself, you will find that in each situation you put on a different front or mask and hide from yourself and the reality that governs you. But the freer and more spontaneous you become, the closer you come to your truthful nature, and the masks drop away. This reality has to be faced, one has to be natural.

Once the great Sufi saint, Mullah Nasruddin, participated in an archery contest. Each candidate was given three arrows and one bow. Mullah took the first arrow, put it in the bow,

stood upright, adjusted his turban, checked the wind and released the arrow. The arrow went way off target. The crowd laughed and said, "This great Sufi master can't even hit the bull's eye!" But Mullah's disciple said to the crowd, "Remember that the master's every action has a purpose. Let us ask him why he missed the target." Mullah replied, "I behaved like an over-confident person who always thinks he can hit the bull's eye and achieve whatever he desires, but an over-confident person is unable to focus and misses the mark." That is the mask of over-confidence.

Then Mullah picked up the second arrow. This time he was much more careful and thoughtful. The arrow went half way and fell to the ground. Again people started laughing and again the disciple asked his master for an explanation. Mullah said, "That was an under-confident person who has suffered failures, who does not have confidence in his own abilities and strengths, who always holds back. Whenever he tries to hit the target, the effort is not quite enough to reach it." Then Mullah picked up the third arrow, released it and hit the bull's eye. He put down the bow, picked up his prize and began to walk away. But people were curious and asked him who the third person was. Mullah looked at them and said, "That was me."

When all the masks and fronts drop and the real person comes to the fore, the goal can be attained. That is satsang, being in association with real truth. This is the first practice and the first stage of bhakti. Bhakti is not sitting gooey eyed in front of an image of the Madonna, or Christ, or guru with tears rolling down your face. That may be an expression of your pure sentiment, it may be your inner conviction, but it is not bhakti. The word devotion means diverted emotion. The first form of experiencing real bhakti is dropping all the fronts that you put up and realizing your true nature.

The second stage of bhakti is developing an optimistic nature and connecting with truth. When you drop the fronts, insecurity and fear arise. "What will happen to me? I am letting go of everything I identified with before. Will I lose myself without the masks and fronts? Is this the real me?" This insecurity and fear of losing control over oneself manifests in a

very intense way. This is where you need to connect with hope, which develops positivity and optimism. Just as you turn the dial of a radio to tune into what you wish to hear, in your life you also have to move your inner focus from insecurity and fear to hope and optimism. This shift involves an effort to come out of a depressive state into a state of optimism and light.

Here again awareness helps, recognizing the mental states helps, associating with inspiring people helps. Reading the scriptures or the lives of saints also helps to inspire one to attain that level of hope and optimism. So in order to overcome insecurities and fears, you not only have to manipulate the mind, you also have to change the outer environment. The third stage of bhakti is trying to overcome one's ego and become selfless. Once you have connected with hope and optimism, the selfless nature expresses itself. Here the real education of bhakti begins, because it is very hard to be free from the ego. These are the first three stages of bhakti. There are six more stages, but we have to realize these three first.

Practices such as mantra repetition, chanting kirtan, visualization of guru and God also help to channel and divert the emotions from identifying with the negative to identifying with the positive. Bhakti is much more intense and difficult than raja yoga. Nevertheless, if you can understand the first three principles of bhakti, you can regulate and redirect the raw energies of the heart and thus connect with the heart.

Does this mean that a completely ignorant person will never experience the realms of the real heart, or does lack of intellect facilitate the attainment of universal connection?

Confusion between intellect and emotion is the question once again. You are trying to understand raw energy with the logical mind, and as we have said before it cannot be understood by the logical mind. It is not a question of being ignorant or intelligent. You have the ability to experience both the mind and the heart, but you are thinking from the mind and therefore you are disconnected from the heart.

When you think from the heart, the mind is disconnected, because they are two opposite forces, like night and day.

Both darkness and light have their own natural roles to play. Similarly, the mind is linear and logical; the heart is abstract, subtle feeling. How will you understand an abstract, subtle feeling with a mind that is conditioned and identifies only with concepts and ideas? It is incorrect to say that an intellectual person will attain enlightenment and an ignorant person will never do so, because you are defining intelligence and ignorance according to your mental conditioning, which is a linear process of awareness.

If you think you are intelligent, you have again put on a mask. If you think you don't know anything, you have also put on a mask. Why can't you just be yourself? Why do you go through these head trips? Just follow the path and allow the experiences to develop. Put your boat in the river and let the current carry you. The trouble is that the current is taking you in one direction, but you want to go in the other direction and are rowing madly against the current. Often you try to row without pulling up the anchor. It is better to simply follow the process without too much analysis. Just allow the experiences to unfold in your life and to guide you.

In spiritual life, nothing is black and white; it is a grey zone, an unexplored zone. You have to become the explorer, and go slowly in your exploration. You have to be aware of the pitfalls and safeguard yourself against falling into holes. If you have to walk from one end of a field to the other in darkness, you will go very slowly and carefully, ensuring that each step is on firm ground. Apply the same principle to your spiritual sadhana. Only fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Therefore, the first principle of yoga is to build up awareness, not intellectual, emotional or sensorial awareness, but all-pervasive awareness.

When there is a problem, the mind gives one answer and the heart gives another. To which do you listen? Swami Vivekananda once said to always choose your heart.

Swami Vivekananda was speaking to people who were not as complicated as we are today. One hundred and fifty years ago, people lived simpler and more natural lives. We have

undergone many mental, social and psychological changes since that time and our understanding and way of life are different. The confusion and conflict people faced then had a different meaning to the confusion and conflict we face today.

A natural choice is made for you when the mind speaks or the heart speaks. This natural choice has to be recognized. Your mind may say something and your heart may feel something else, but there will be a natural attraction to one or the other, before you start analyzing them. The one that is appropriate for you will always be in a stronger position. If your heart feels right, you will ignore your mind; you will naturally make that choice. Nobody can say that the mind is always right or the heart is always right. We don't even know the language of the heart. We think love is sensual, sensorial, physical, emotional. Our compassion and sympathy are coloured by intellectual ideas and conditioned by our social education. So we don't even know whether our heart speaks or not. The heart speech is not converted into thought and ideas by the logical mind. The ego or personal identity guides and directs the functions of the mind. We have not yet connected with our heart. We have experienced the conditioned nature of the feelings and emotions of the heart, but that is not connecting with the heart.

The heart is only experienced in the highest state of realization, when the conditioned nature is transcended and we begin to experience the unconditional self. Even in samadhi we do not experience the heart, we experience the flowering of the mind and intellect. *Dhi* means 'intelligence' and *sam* means 'balance'. In samadhi we are experiencing balanced wisdom. After samadhi, one has to go through eight different stages of unfolding to have the heart experience. Patanjali speaks of eight limbs of yoga, which represent the personal effort that we put into experiencing yoga. This personal experience is preparation for the expression of yoga after the attainment of samadhi.

The eightfold yoga of Patanjali is: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dhyana and samadhi. Here we are working at preparing ourselves to transform our mind, body,

senses, perceptions, attitudes and emotions. We are making an attempt to understand who we are. Patanjali's yoga is self-oriented yoga. Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana help you. Samadhi is your attainment. It is necessary to know the self in order to transform the nature. Afterwards, however, yoga has to be expressed for the upliftment of others. After the yoga of Patanjali, the eightfold path of Sivananda begins.

In the path of Sivananda yoga, the eight steps are: serve, love, give, purify, be good, do good, meditate, realize. Service comes first. It is not social service where you provide food to the hungry, but an attitude with which you identify when you realize the need of another being and help to fulfil that need so that the other person may become happy. Service is actually a process of education. It has been said, "If someone is hungry, don't give them fish to eat, but teach them how to fish." It is a long-term process in which you hope to fulfil others' needs, and it means that you have to become selfless first.

The second stage of Sivananda yoga is love. The love that Swami Sivananda speaks about is not sensual or sensorial love, but a connection with everyone, feeling for others in the same way that you feel for yourself. If you are buying shoes for your own children, buy an extra pair for another child who has none. Connect with their need. If you put a drop of ink in a cup of water, the water will turn black. How can you make the water transparent again without throwing it away? By pouring it into a bucket of water, so that the blackness dissolves in the greater body of water. You identify with four people and they are your world. That is your attachment. How can you get rid of that attachment? Expand your own family by taking others into the fold of your extended family. Provide them with the care, affection, love, sympathy and compassion that you would give to your own family. In that way, your attachment will dissolve and you will become a happier person. This connection is love.

The third stage of Sivananda yoga is give. Serving, loving and giving go hand in hand. When you love somebody, you want to give them everything. But instead of giving to one

person, give to a group. Instead of giving to society, give to humanity. Expand your horizons. The more you expand, the more you purify. Purification is the fourth stage of Sivananda yoga. The darkness goes away and one becomes clear. So, serve, love, give, purify.

When you practise these four stages, you become good. Whatever you do is always good. Being good is the fifth stage of Sivananda yoga. When you become good, then whatever you do is good. Doing good is the sixth stage of Sivananda yoga. The seventh stage is meditation. You are discovering yourself. As you have overcome your self-oriented nature, meditation connects you with the cosmic forces and energy. The eighth stage of Sivananda yoga is realization, knowing that I and my father are one. This is not an intellectual concept, but something that one lives and experiences every moment.

The heart song can be sung only after perfecting Patanjali's yoga. For this reason we have never connected with our heart. What we have felt is the conditioned nature of the heart and feelings, but these conditioned emotions are not the language of the heart. The tradition says that God lives in the heart, which means that if you connect with the heart, you connect with God in his totality, in his absolute glory. Therefore, yoga is the sustained effort to connect with the heart by transcending the mind.

If you just want to know what is right and what is wrong, fall back to Patanjali's first stage. Develop discrimination and awareness of what is appropriate and inappropriate according to the circumstances. Without discrimination, even the heart can lead you the wrong way. If there is discrimination, the mind can become a useful tool to experience the transcendental nature. Therefore, practise, transform and evolve.

Satsang 1

How can we practise meditative awareness in our daily lives?

Meditation is not sitting with your eyes closed and isolating yourself from everything around you; it is identifying with your sensorial environment with awareness and focused attention. Swami Satyananda has described the process of meditation in the following way. When you sit for meditation, be aware of three components: i) the meditator, yourself, the one who is practising meditation, ii) the process of meditation, the sequence you adopt, and iii) the object of meditation which is to be attained. Meditation always begins with threefold awareness.

As you go deeper into states of concentration and identification with the process, at a certain stage one component drops and only two remain: the meditator and the object of meditation. Then, as you progress further, another component drops and only one experience remains: the object of meditation.

Normally, our idea of meditation is to simply identify with the object of meditation by ignoring the meditator and the process. When we try to identify with the object of meditation, we create our own images and experiences according to our own conditioning. Sometimes we have very good experiences in meditation, which eventually conditions our mind to search for the same experience in our future meditation, and we block the process of our meditation. For example, you are meditating and suddenly you see inside the big bang, maybe you see some

angels flying, or there is an experience of light and peace and silence. Later, you say to yourself, "What a wonderful experience I had!" and in subsequent meditations you will look for the experience you enjoyed. You build a wall around that particular experience and if another experience comes, you will reject or avoid it. This process is not meditation, concentration or awareness. It is simply connecting with pleasures, not in the sensorial direction, but in the mind.

Therefore, we have not yet practised meditation. We have closed our eyes, visualized a few things, repeated a mantra, and felt relaxed when we isolated ourselves from distractions, but that state has not really created the necessary transformation in the mind. Nor has it given us control over our reactions to situations, because we have practised in our sleep, not in our waking state. Sleep is not snoring or lying in bed, but isolating oneself from the distractions of the senses by creating our own fantasies with which we identify.

In the process of dynamic meditation we become aware of the activities of the body and the senses, and follow the train of thought in the mind. There is also the component of awareness and one-pointedness in that experience. So, when you walk, be aware that you are walking and make it into a walking meditation. Walking should not become an unconscious activity; there has to be awareness of each movement of the legs and body. If you run, be aware that you are running and see yourself running. If you are sitting, be aware that you are sitting. If there is pain or stiffness, be aware of it. If you eat, be aware that you are eating. If you talk, be aware that you are talking.

While I am speaking to you, I am observing myself too. I am aware of what I am saying, I am aware of my hand movements, I am aware of my eyes and who I am watching. I am aware of the wind blowing and feeling it. In the beginning, one needs to make an effort to develop this awareness, but eventually it becomes spontaneous. Awareness of the activity of the body, senses and mind, eventually leads to an understanding of yourself. It provides you with greater ability to direct your forces, energies and expressions so that

your actions become creative, your mind becomes positive and you are transported to another realm of experience and awareness. In the beginning, however, one has to make an effort and understand that each moment of the day can become a meditative moment. Meditation is just a method of developing your awareness to such an extent that nothing escapes it. This awareness then extends outwards, and is not only confined to the body. That is the final aim of meditation.

If there is no noise anywhere, it is very easy to become introverted, but real strength lies in becoming introverted in the middle of noise. Swami Satyananda used to say that there is no silence in the mountains and there is no noise in the world. It is our own mental perception. If we are able to guide the mind, we will find absolute silence in the middle of a busy market. If the mind is not managed properly, even on a remote mountain there will be so much chatter that we won't be able to face ourselves. So awareness and mental focus have to be developed, and dynamic meditation is an important aspect of this process. If you can begin with this form of meditation, you will find that you derive much more benefit from the meditation you practise later on.

What does jignasu initiation mean, and why is the colour yellow used?

The question is about initiation, not only about jignasu. Swami Satyananda used to tell the story of a bird flying over the ocean looking for a place to land. It kept on flying till its wings became tired, but did not find land. Suddenly, its eyes fell on a piece of driftwood floating on the surface of the ocean. The bird landed on the driftwood to rest, and after it had rested it again began searching for land. But this time the bird made sure that it always had the driftwood within sight. Whenever it became tired of flying, it would land on that piece of wood to rest. We can apply this example in our own spiritual journey. After we have performed our asana and pranayama, the physical practices of yoga, and internalized ourselves to discover our inner nature, we need to have a point of reference. This is where initiation plays an important role.

The first initiation is mantra. Mantra is a sound of power. We are all compressed energies, and this energy within is continuously vibrating. The atoms in our body have a nucleus in the centre, which is continuously in motion. Wherever there is motion, there is bound to be sound created by friction. If we move our hand from left to right, sound is being created, but we cannot hear it. Our hearing functions within a certain range, but beyond this range, below it and above it, the sounds continue to exist, but our sense of hearing is unable to pick them up. Mantras represent the subtle sounds contained in the body.

Take the example of the chakras or psychic centres in the body. There is one main chakra and six sub-chakras. The main chakra is sahasrara at the crown of the head; it is the master switch, the command switch. The six chakras beneath sahasrara are ajna chakra at the eyebrow centre, the seat of intuition; vishuddhi chakra at the throat, representing the space element; anahata chakra in the heart space, representing the air element; manipura chakra behind the navel, representing the fire element; swadhisthana in the sacral region at the spine, representing the water element; and mooladhara in the perineum, representing matter. The chakras are centres of energy and vibration, and mantras correspond to these different centres.

Mantras are combinations of sounds, and their repetition influences and awakens the chakras in our body. Recognizing the mantra and using it to internalize and awaken consciousness is the first step in yoga. Of course, in our blissful ignorance, we have tried to give a logical meaning to mantras, and many people believe that mantras are invocations to different gods and goddesses, that they are religious in nature. There are texts describing how mantras correspond to different chakras in our system. This idea is not only yogic but also universal.

The Bible says, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God.” That word was a sound, a vibration. You can give it a name through your intellect, Om, Amen, Amin and so on, but the fact is that it was a word, a combination of

sounds, frequencies and vibrations. The purpose of that word was to connect the individual self with the higher Self. If you knew that word, you knew God, because the word was with God, which indicates that it is the frequency, the vibration, the sound which can elevate the human consciousness to higher dimensions.

Mantra initiation is the first step in our spiritual journey, using the mantra, internalizing the consciousness, connecting with the source of strength inside and harmonizing the fluctuations of these psychic centres. When we are dealing with our consciousness, there is no map to guide us through the different states, and therefore mantra becomes the base from which we take off and to which we return after flying through our consciousness. Mantra is always used at the time of meditation, so there is a link with the vibratory and energy aspect of our self, *shoonya*, nothingness. Consciousness is space and mantra allows us to experience that space, the basis of all creation. Yoga stops there. For a yoga practitioner, mantra is more than enough.

Jignasu sannyasa, karma sannyasa and poorna sannyasa are all traditional initiations in the path of sannyasa. In Sanskrit, the word for initiation is *diksha*, which comes from the word *drik*, meaning to see, to perceive. Therefore, according to the tradition, *diksha* means developing the ability to perceive and know yourself. The word sannyasa comes from *nyasa*, meaning ‘renunciation’, and *sam*, meaning ‘total’. Sannyasa is a tradition in which you give everything you have, your strength, inspiration, thoughts, convictions, and connect with the higher purpose.

Once there was only poorna sannyasa, complete sannyasa. Society said that those following the path of sannyasa should be free from the regulations and conditions of materialistic society to pursue their spiritual quest. Society supported the tradition of sannyasa by freeing sannyasins from social obligations and maintaining them. Approximately five thousand years ago, at the time of Krishna, however, there was an imbalance in society; spiritual people and materialistic people went their own separate ways. So Krishna created another tradition.

He said that the experience of spiritual life is the birthright of everyone. Just as a bird needs two wings, a human being needs two identities, material and spiritual, in order to evolve and succeed in life. Krishna introduced the idea of karma sannyasa, which he described in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The first karma sannyasin was his friend and disciple, Arjuna, to whom Krishna said, “Your karmas, or actions, must have a purpose. Those actions must be according to law and justice, they must fulfil you and at the same time help others uplift themselves.”

In the twentieth century Swami Satyananda revived the tradition of karma sannyasa. He said, “Continue to live in your home with your family and job. You don’t have to renounce them to attain a spiritual identity, but identify with your inner nature. When you are with yourself, you are a sannyasin, a person dedicated to the spiritual quest and inner discovery. When you are in society, fulfil all your obligations in the best possible manner and do not ignore or reject any of your duties or commitments.”

However, everyone has ambitions. Many people with absolutely no spiritual inclination just wanted to be part of the scene to project their egos. So it was decided that a change was needed, as people were misusing the colour garu to fulfil their own ambitions. We introduced an initial stage where people could make an effort to understand sannyasa and their spiritual obligations. So we introduced the idea of jignasu sannyasa. *Jignasu* means seeker, novice. There are rules about what has to be perfected before progressing to the next stage. Anybody can take jignasu initiation, but beyond that it is our decision, not yours. This is a tradition for which we left the pleasures of life and we do not want it to be diluted by personal ambitions and aspirations. So karma sannyasa initiation is not your choice, it is our decision, which will be final.

In each initiation, you need to identify with certain qualities within yourself. You have to make the effort to cultivate qualities that can help you to connect with the source. Until you achieve that perfection, do not move to the next stage, because ultimately you will be duping yourself, as eventually you will have to confront the truth in your life.

Satsang 2

Is there heaven or hell after death for those who believe in this concept?

Heaven represents happiness, bliss and contentment, as the divine forces are present there, God is there, whereas hell represents pain and suffering, as the demons are present there. You do not have to die in order to decide where you are going to end up. Just close your eyes and look inside, and see where you are, in happiness or in pain, and you will know whether you are in hell or heaven.

That is where they exist in our perception, too. If we are part of God and if our nature is divine, then how will we ever experience heaven or how will we ever go to hell? We are part of the transcendental reality. If God was not in us and if we were not part of the transcendental nature, then it would be possible to say that there is heaven and hell, because then they would be different from us. If we happened to go to hell, it would mean that the God within us would also go to hell with us. And if God goes to hell, then hell will become heaven! The place of duality is this world, day and night, good and bad, exist here. If we can purify ourselves to such an extent that we connect with goodness, then this world will become heaven. If we identify with our suffering, weakness and pain, then this world will become hell. So the choice, what we wish to make of this world, is actually ours.

What effect does silence have on our mind?

In Sanskrit, *antar mouna* means ‘inner silence’. It is one of the techniques that Swami Satyananda taught to quieten the turbulence of the mind. Unless we can start to quieten the mind, we cannot achieve positive effects in the personality. All yoga practices involve just this. Most of the time, the internal monologue goes on and on: “Oh, why did I say such a terrible thing?” “He was a horrible person, I should have hit him.” “Wasn’t I a terrible person for doing that, I should be ashamed of myself!” And so the turbulence continues. Then we go to a yoga class and the first thing we do is some Om chanting. We are trying to break up the internal monologue. While this concentration is going on, the disturbing thoughts are neutralized, and before we know where we are we start to develop inner silence, *antar mouna*. Then we might do *nadi shodhana*; we are concentrating on the movement of the brain. Then we do *yoga nidra*. All the time, we are becoming more one-pointed in our practices. If we can develop this, not just during the practice, but during our daily activities, we gradually develop greater peace of mind.

Silence is not absence of experience, but providing a new direction for the mental expressions. At present, the wind is blowing at thirty kilometres per hour. We can feel the movement and the noise, but if the wind suddenly stops and becomes a gentle breeze, maybe moving at one kilometre per hour, then it cannot be experienced through the senses. The movement is still there, but our senses do not experience it. Even when you close the door and windows in a room, there will still be movement of the air, but it will be imperceptible. That imperceptible nature is called the silent nature.

In yoga, the internal monologue is known as the working of the *vrittis*. The mental expressions or *vrittis* are not only conscious, but also subconscious and unconscious. When we think of silence, we think of stopping the conscious perception and activity. But we cannot control the subconscious or the unconscious. Therefore, in Sanskrit the word for silence is *mouna*. *Mouna* also means measured silence. For example, when a chain of thoughts or feelings surfaces in the mind with

force, it creates inner agitation and dissipates the energies. However, when we become aware of the thoughts and feelings and try to redirect them towards a state where there is greater control over these expressions, then we know their nature, and that is known as mouna or silence.

Absolute silence is not possible. If you achieve absolute silence, then body, mind and feeling do not exist. Absolute silence can only be achieved in death, which is destruction of the total personality. However, we are trying to find silence while living. Therefore, it has to be understood that silence is a meditative state of mind where we are in control of the mental or inner expressions.

Is it essential not to take alcohol or drugs if we are moving towards self-realization?

Misusing drugs or alcohol can definitely damage the body and mind. Realization is a state of purity of the self in which one is established in the nature of sattwa, in which the body and the cells of the body become enlightened; they are in harmony with nature. Anything that disturbs this harmony of enlightenment is bad for enlightenment. The *Yoga Sutras* say that even drugs can be used to achieve enlightenment, but you have to remain the master of the drug, not allow the drug to become the ruler of your life.

The drug defined in the *Yoga Sutras* is soma, a natural drug which is compatible with the body. People could eat and smoke soma without any ill effects on the body; its use increased the sensitivity of the nerves, senses, mind, intellect and emotions. If you practised your sadhana after taking soma, you would have deeper experiences. These experiences stayed with you; they were not drug-induced, but sadhana-induced experiences. Soma would only intensify or focus the effects of the sadhana in the personality. If you think marijuana, ice, crack or coke will help achieve enlightenment, you are alone on that journey. These drugs have a vortex effect on the mind. Imagine being caught in a vortex. You have no control, you just go round and round. Therefore, using present day drugs or alcohol is not recommended for yoga practitioners.

How can we accept suffering?

For the sake of understanding, let us create an image. A car is being driven by your son or daughter and is full of their friends. You get a phone call that they have met with an accident and everyone is in hospital. You begin to worry, get in your car and drive madly to the hospital, where you go straight to your child. Although other people may be dying in the other beds, you gravitate towards your child because you identify with your child. You feel the pain of your child, but you don't feel for the others who may be affected much more. This indicates that suffering is due to personal attachment and identification. When we identify with something as 'mine', we become attached to it, and its loss creates suffering. Suffering is an individual expression of personal attachment, which we have with family, friends or material objects.

We are all caught up in the attraction of personal identification. We convey words of sympathy to other people, but for ourselves we seek something more than sympathy. If we can understand this personal identification and attachment, then maybe we will be able to manage our pain and suffering in a different and possibly better way. We identify with the body, so we feel pain in the body. We identify with the emotions, so we feel emotional suffering. We identify with our mind, so we become aware of mental suffering. Suffering remains a part of our life as long as we identify with sense objects.

It is like the man who came to the ashram feeling totally destroyed because he had lost his home and family. After pouring out all his pain and frustration, he walked away. Some children were playing nearby and a little girl began crying because her doll's arm was broken. The man comforted her and told her not to cry because she could always get a new doll. Then I said to him, "Try to remember those words. You have the ability to change your inner perception. Just as you have inspired that child, you also have the ability to inspire yourself to overcome your feelings of frustration and loss. You might have lost your home and family, but you have not lost yourself. You still have the ability to regain what you have

lost. As long as you are able to make a sustained effort, you can never be a loser in life.” A few years later that man had a new home and family. He had connected with his strengths. He experienced loss, but was able to overcome it.

It is also important to let go of attachment. It takes time to reach this stage, and it is hope that keeps us going. When you become an observer, recognize the pain and suffering and also recognize hope. Identifying with hope will uplift you again. Therefore, yoga says that in meditation observe what you are experiencing. Be the observer, not the experience. Often we are unable to extract ourselves from the experienter. Therefore, meditation becomes an important tool to witness that experience. It is a painful process. Slowly we overcome the pain and suffering by connecting with hope. Hope gives us the strength and courage to once again make a new life.

What is the significance of prasad?

Every country has its own traditions. There is a Shiva temple in India where only alcohol is offered, and when you make the offering, it simply disappears into the shivalingam. When the British ruled India, they tried to investigate this phenomenon, but could not find where the whisky was being stored. The prasad of that temple is also alcohol. This is a tradition, not something extraordinary, and it is the belief that works. In Spain, Santa Clara accepts offerings of eggs. As prasad you receive a photo of the Virgin Mother, who is also the Cosmic Mother. By making the offering and receiving the prasad, you connect with that motherly aspect. Therefore, do not think that you are receiving a religious symbol when you are given prasad. See it as something that helps you to connect with the cosmic nature of compassion and love. Cherish, respect and keep the prasad as a memento of the place from where you receive it.

Satsang 3

**What are the components required to perform karma yoga?
What is the place of karma yoga in our lives?**

Life is nothing but karma. *Karma* means ‘action’. The entire creation is the result of karma. Without karma, there would be no creation. Our existence is an expression of karma; the essence of existence is karma. Karma is universal, macrocosmic, and also individual, microcosmic. Karma means the ongoing process which creates subsequent results in the future.

Karma is not linear, but circular. The karma of a seed is to become a seed again, not just to grow into a tree and provide shade, flowers and fruits. In the process of becoming a seed again, it goes through many transformations. When you plant the seed in the ground, first it sprouts and then slowly the sprout grows bigger and becomes a tree. Flowers bloom, fruits appear. People enjoy the smell and the beauty of the flowers and the taste of the fruits. But inside the fruit is the seed, which is the fulfilment of the karma of the original seed. This seed has the potential to become a tree again when planted. Karma is not just action and reaction. It is creating something which has the same potential as the original. Until you express that possibility, you undergo metamorphoses and changes, like flowering and bearing fruit.

As human beings, we are subject to the law of karma. The definition of karma is different from the law of karma. A seed evolving into a seed is the nature and definition of karma. But as individual entities we are subject to the law of karma,

which is action and the corresponding reaction arising from that action. If you clap your hands together, the outcome is sound. If you do good to others, the result is good for you. If you misuse the body, the body will flash warning lights. If you do what is bad, you will receive what is bad. This is an ongoing process of life.

Without karma there is no life. The body, mind, senses, intellect and emotions all have their own karma, but they surround us in such a manner that we are not able to realize these karmas. The influence of the karmas is such that they hypnotize our mind and nature and we are not able to extract ourselves from their influence. However, yoga says that we can become aware of the karmas and modify them. The moment we become aware and begin to realize them, karma becomes karma yoga.

Karma is unconscious participation and involvement in the normal processes of life. Karma yoga is conscious participation. When the word yoga is added to karma, the karmas become conscious. When the word yoga is removed, we again fall back to unconscious participation. These actions and reactions affect our behaviour, performance, attitude and understanding. When we are subject to our karma, our awareness is also oriented towards the self. It is the karmas that make us the centre of our own universe. When we add the component of yoga to karma, karma becomes selfless. Normally, we feel that we are the doer. We become karma yogis when we realize that we are not the doer, someone else is. It is like a harmonium thinking it can play itself and create new melodies. That is ego identification or karma identification. But when the harmonium realizes that someone else has to play it to bring out the melody, that identification disappears. So, self-identification is karma and selfless awareness is karma yoga.

Whatever we do, we expect an outcome which is to our satisfaction and when we do not get what we expect, we become sad and frustrated. In karma yoga, the first aspect to go away is the desire for a result. In the third chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna the same thing.

Everyone performs karma with a desire to eventually enjoy the fruit of their action. If you work in an office, you expect to earn money, otherwise you would not work there. However, if you work in an ashram selflessly, there is no expectation of a result. So karma yoga builds up the immunity of the personality and makes one immune to the effects of the karmas.

Karma yoga is modifying the attitudes, changing the viewpoints. It is realizing that you are continuously performing karmas and that at the same time you can be free from their effects. When you do not identify with your personal expectations and actions and when you realize that your efforts and actions can help others, that is karma yoga. This change of attitude improves the quality of the mind and you begin to understand the relevance and need for karma yoga in your life.

How should one raise a child so that he or she is not conditioned?

First of all, a parent should not behave like a parent, because when you identify with parenthood, you try to control the child. Parents are always telling their children not to do this and not to do that, to sit this way and eat that way. The word ‘don’t’ predominates. In this way, you become the judge, jury and executioner of the child’s personality.

For a child’s nature to develop freely without conditioning, it is important that the parents become the child’s friends. If you can be a friend to your child, the child will develop in an open and unconditioned way. Children tend to identify with and be influenced by their friends more than their parents. A friend says, “Let’s experiment with drink and drugs, parties and discos,” and the child says, “Yes, let’s.” It seems that friendship can influence the mind in a deeper and subtler way than parenthood. However, friendship does not mean that you leave your children alone to do whatever they wish. As a friend, you have to encourage, guide, support and inspire them.

If your child wants to smoke, say to him or her, “Look, you are free to do it, but it is not good for you. Be ready to face the consequences if smoking becomes a habit in your life.”

In this way, you can direct the child's desires from becoming destructive to something better. That is the best form of education a child can have to be free from conditioning.

When you deny a child something, he will always want to do it. It is a natural response; curiosity is the mother of intellect. If we were not curious, we would not gain in understanding. When curiosity is guided, an appreciation of that understanding will help the intellect evolve to great heights. Children have this curiosity; they want to know, discover and experiment with things. But they are not guided and when curiosity is not guided, it can eventually become self-destructive. Therefore, instead of denying your children opportunities, present them with all of life's opportunities. As their friend and mentor, guide them in the right direction where they can realize both the good and the bad.

As a young child, I sometimes acted without a reason. It was just a process of self-actualization. My guru guided me through that process, not by becoming the pontiff whom I had to obey, but by becoming my friend. He gave me permission to do everything under the sun. When he gave me sannyasa and took me to the West, he said, "I have given you sannyasa, but I will not hold you to it. You are free to choose your own path and create your destiny. If you want to marry, you have my permission. If you want to enter a profession, you have my permission. If you want to remain a sannyasin, you have my blessings." When he said that, I started looking at the pros and cons of everything. I had many foster parents, too, around the world, who gave me the opportunity to grow freely, without imposing ideas of morality on me. Ultimately I decided sannyasa was my path.

Being given the freedom and guidance to experience and become your creative self, not your conditioned self, is the best form of education. Children do not receive that at school, and lack the encouragement, support and friendship of their parents. So always be a friend to your child and not a parent.

Initiation

Mantra

Initiation is given to you on behalf of the tradition of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. With mantra initiation, you receive a booklet containing your mantra and symbol. There are two ways of doing the mantra, one is as sadhana and the other is spontaneous. When you practise mantra as a sadhana, as a regular part of your yoga routine, set aside ten minutes each day. Twenty-three hours and fifty minutes are for the world and ten minutes are for yourself. In those ten minutes, sit down in a quiet place, make yourself physically still and then quieten the mind.

Focus on the symbol given in the mantra booklet. Once you have started to focus on the symbol, begin to repeat the mantra mentally with the mala; there should be one mantra repetition for each bead of the mala. Hold the mala between the third finger and the thumb. The tassel at the top of the mala is known as the *sumeru*. With the middle finger, begin to move one bead from the sumeru and mentally repeat the mantra once, then another bead and another mantra repetition, and so on. Move one bead at a time, repeating the mantra mentally. Initially, it may be a little difficult to keep the little finger and the index finger separate. Continue in this manner until you complete one mala. When you complete one mala, do not cross the sumeru, but turn around.

Practise two malas of the mantra, one clockwise and one anti-clockwise. It will take approximately ten minutes to do

two malas. When you finish the mantra practice, drop the mala and become silent internally, feeling the effect of the mantra within you. This is mantra sadhana.

Spontaneous mantra chanting is where you just keep on repeating the mantra mentally, wherever you are, whenever you wish. The only place not to chant the mantra is while driving a car. While walking, eating, travelling, drinking, sitting on a chair, just for a few moments, one minute or ten minutes, depending on the time available, you can mentally repeat the mantra, even with your eyes open.

Jignasu – the seeker’s path

As for the yellow sunflowers, you have been given initiation into jignasu sannyasa, and from today you are spiritual seekers. You are advised to pick one yama or one niyama, and try to live it at least for a month. Have a spiritual diary in which you write down your spiritual experiences, thoughts and flashes of inspiration. Whether you are high or low does not matter; just be an observer and write it all down. You can even make a private list of your strengths and weaknesses. Write down twenty, thirty, forty or fifty strengths. Think about it; you don’t have to come to a conclusion in one day. Take your time, even a month. You can write down one strength, then cross it out, and continue the process, but after a month of personal analysis and awareness, you will come to a conclusion about your strengths.

In the same way, analyze your weaknesses, the shortcomings that inhibit the expression of your creativity. Write them down also. If you are not sure, ask your companion to write them down for you, then you will get a different perspective on yourself. Then, work to transform one weakness into a strength. Work with one strength to convert it into a quality that uplifts you.

So identify your strengths and weaknesses, and work with one item every month. At the end of one month, don’t say, “Oh, I feel I haven’t completed the transformation, so I should continue.” Just change it. Don’t be obsessive about it, be spontaneous. This is an important practice to recognize

your own nature, and to work with your strengths to overcome your weaknesses.

Karma sannyasa and SWAN

Karma sannyasa initiates should add ambitions and needs along with strengths and weaknesses. Discover what your ambitions are and what your needs are at present. Don't confuse your needs with ambitions, and your ambitions with needs. Learn to differentiate between the two. You can also write them down. With clarity of mind try to observe your ambitions. If it is appropriate, pursue it, and if you find it is not really necessary, then work to fulfil your needs. Remember that the inner path, the spiritual path, is about remaining grounded, not floating in imagination and fantasies. Take that first step because the journey of a thousand miles always begins with the first step. We wish you all the best in your spiritual quest.

Connecting with the Spirit

Many thousands of years ago the knowledgeable ones taught us that peace and contentment can ultimately be found by connecting with spirit, not by identifying with matter. Our work is simply an extension of the work that was started by the seers of the past. It is not something that is going to shake the earth and bring about a new order tomorrow.

There is a story in the epic *Ramayana* about when Rama was standing beside the ocean, wondering how to cross the ocean and reach Sri Lanka. He was advised to build a bridge, and one of the greatest feats in the history of humanity was begun, linking India and the island of Sri Lanka. The ruins of that bridge can still be seen in satellite photos, and scientists have called it Adam's Bridge. They say it was built one million sixty thousand years ago and was man-made. That is also the period of the *Ramayana*.

So many powerful people were carrying rocks and placing them in the ocean. A little squirrel also wanted to help construct the bridge, but she did not have the muscle power to lift the big rocks. So she would wet herself in the water and then roll in the sand, which stuck to her wet body. Then she would go to the bridge and shake herself, thereby helping to fill the gaps between the rocks with sand, and then continue the process. The story does not remember all the stalwarts who helped to construct the immense bridge, but that squirrel has become immortal for her contribution.

The seers of the past have placed the big rocks, and we are like the little squirrel trying to assist in strengthening the bridge by doing what we can. It is not our role to create a world order, but to contribute in our small way to strengthening the bridge which can take us from the untranscendental world to the transcendental experience. We know that we cannot construct the bridge; possibly in our lifetime we can only fill in one or two gaps between the rocks. But whatever happens, I will die in peace, knowing that I did my bit. Then maybe God will take me in his hands and say, "My son, you did well." Remember, you have to clap, not for me, but for everyone who has dedicated their life to strengthening this bridge.

Our time together is coming to an end. We hope you will return home with some new thoughts to mull over. Firstly, develop the ability to recognize the true nature of things. If you can do that, you will be well on the path of yoga and find that many of the solutions you are searching for are attained spontaneously. Secondly, recognize your needs, ambitions, strengths and weaknesses, because then you can improve the quality of your life. Thirdly, yoga should not remain confined to the classroom environment, but become part of your daily routine and expressions.

Yoga: A Universal Science

University of Balearic Isles, Palma, May 19, 2004

Yoga is a universal tradition. Although yoga is emerging from India at present, it was once a universal philosophy. The evidence can still be found in the ancient cultures of South America, Scandinavia and North Africa as well as Asia. In the course of time, due to political and natural disturbances, the philosophy of yoga was lost in these countries, but it was preserved for humanity in India by a group of renunciates known as swamis. Therefore, in this age, yoga is again emerging from India as a universal subject.

The aim of yoga is to understand the human personality and our relationship with the universe. We have all been given a very special gift called life or existence, without which our attainments are nothing. Existence has to be viewed not only from a material and physical point of view, but in a more integrated way. That is also the aim of yoga, to research existence and life and to enhance and develop our inner potential.

The word *yoga* means union. This has been interpreted in three ways. Firstly, as meaning union of man and God; secondly, as the coming together of individual consciousness and transcendental consciousness; and thirdly as integrating the qualities of head, heart and hands. The head represents understanding, knowledge or intellect, the heart represents feelings, sentiments or emotions, and the hands represent the ability to perform creatively.

From a practical perspective, we subscribe to the third interpretation, integration of head, heart and hands, because

that is the need of today. We do not need other philosophies, because those we have are sufficient to guide our personal aspirations towards a better existence. Rather we need a process or a method by which to understand and develop ourselves. Yoga seeks this development in each individual. Let us look at yoga in three parts: physical, psychological and spiritual.

Physical aspect of yoga

In physical yoga, which is the most commonly known yoga, postures, known as *asanas* in Sanskrit, are practised. These postures are not exercises, but states in which the body is in perfect balance and alignment. If you are asked to stand on one leg with your eyes closed for five minutes, you will be unable to do it because your body is lacking in harmony, and distractions and disturbances will take over. You can blame it on your nerves or weak muscles, but the point is that the body is not balanced. The purpose of the postures is to provide physical alignment.

The body has many channels, which carry not only blood, but also the vital force, *prana*, to each and every part. Practising yoga postures balances this vital energy. Therefore, in the classical yogic texts, *asana* is defined as a steady, comfortable state of the body in which there are no blockages. Physical balance eventually affects the behaviour of the human brain, which has a left and a right hemisphere. Yoga also believes that many centres in the brain are inactive, and that physical harmony and balance in the field of the *pranas* helps to activate these dormant areas. Once the brain is activated even a minute amount, a transformation takes place in the mind and consciousness.

There is a big difference between our ability to understand and perform today compared with ten thousand years ago when we were living in a primitive age. How did this transformation occur? Why are we working with sophisticated instruments today and no longer with primitive tools? How could this leap in consciousness have taken place? Darwin called it evolution, but is the word evolution enough to describe the process of transformation?

An ongoing transformation is taking place in our personality. Our knowledge of situations and how to deal with them has changed. Whatever we study or understand helps to awaken an area which makes us more aware and slightly different than before. It is difficult to pinpoint whether it is a cerebral and mental process, a process of consciousness, or exactly what it is, but if we look at the total human personality, we can reach the simple conclusion that the human mind and consciousness are in a continuous process of transformation, which can be called evolution.

Therefore, yoga looks at the human personality not as independent units of behaviour and expression, but as one subject. If you practise postures, it will affect the mind; if you practise meditation, it will affect the body. The yoga practices complement each other. The aim of the physical practices is to complement the mental component. The mental component, influenced by the practices of concentration, relaxation and meditation, helps us to find our roots, which is the spiritual nature.

Yoga Sutras and the process of yoga

About two and a half thousand years ago, Patanjali wrote the classic text on yoga known as the *Yoga Sutras*. Yoga sutras are yoga aphorisms. The opening statement is, “Yoga is a form of inner discipline.” This is a very important point. We think of discipline as something that is imposed, but in yoga, discipline begins with knowledge and self-awareness. If we want to drive a car, we have to go through the process of getting in, starting the engine, engaging the gears, releasing the hand brake, depressing the accelerator and then gradually driving off. Without awareness of this sequence, accidents will happen. Similarly, internal discipline involves an understanding of how the human nature, body and emotions interact with each other. Once we know how they work, we are able to direct them constructively and creatively. That is known as inner discipline.

With inner discipline a square peg will fit in a square hole and a round peg in a round hole. However, because of our

ambitions we try to fit a square peg in a round hole or a round peg in a square hole, and there is a mismatch. This mismatch is the cause of the dramas that arise in the form of depression, frustration or tension, physical illness and psychological problems, and it does not allow the potential of the mind to be developed. If you do not know how to sleep peacefully and resort to sleeping tablets, it means you have lost the ability to direct your energies. Being able to sleep without worry is one of life's greatest gifts, but many people are unable to do so because they cannot remove the confusions and conflicts that affect their relationships and social lives. Therefore, the opening statement of the *Yoga Sutras* on internal discipline has to be understood from the very beginning.

The second aphorism of the *Yoga Sutras* states that internal discipline leads to management of the mental states. When you are able to manage the internal psychological conditions in a better way, then you become established in your real nature, which is the third statement. This is the process of yoga as defined in the classical texts.

In order to fulfil these three aims: inner discipline, management of the mental states and being established in our own nature, many yogic practices have evolved. The physical postures are the physical component. Scientific investigations into the effects of yogic postures on the body have shown that these practices can help to manage many physical diseases and imbalances. In some countries, physical yoga has been recognized as an alternative therapy, especially in the management of so-called psychosomatic illnesses, which begin in the mind and affect the physical body. Tension, for example, is the cause of hypertension, sleeplessness and many other physiological disorders such as digestive problems. Usually we treat the problem that has manifested, not the cause. If a person with hypertension takes a tablet, it will reduce their level of tension but not get rid of their stress. Investigations have proved that as the causes of mental conflicts, confusion, stress and tension are reduced with yoga practices, many physiological disorders disappear by themselves and there is greater control over one's inner behaviour, which leads to inner discipline.

Mental aspect of yoga

The next stage is the mental aspect of yoga. It is very difficult to manage the mind, let alone relax the mind, focus the attention and become one-pointed. The practices of concentration, visualization and relaxation help to achieve harmony in the mental dimension.

There is a difference between the mind and consciousness. Yoga believes that what we call the mind is the interactive consciousness in the world of objects and senses. Imagine you are a diver in the ocean. As you enter the water there is plenty of light, but as you go deeper the light decreases and darkness increases. On the surface there are waves, movements of air and water, but as you go deeper the agitations decrease, yet there are very powerful currents which cannot be seen. The mind is the upper surface of the ocean which is interacting with the environment, and as a result there is a lot of agitation on the surface. The mind is continually being influenced by the attraction and repulsion of the senses and the world of objects. When there is attraction, the tide comes in; when there is repulsion, the tide goes out. In yoga, this interactive state of consciousness is known as the mind.

When we go deeper and there is no interaction between the inner and outer environment, but only one form of existence, that is known as consciousness. However, within consciousness there are many powerful undercurrents or conditionings. When we practise the mental aspect of yoga, the concentration, visualization, relaxation and meditation techniques, we are discovering the nature of the interactive mind and the undercurrents of consciousness. These practices aim to bring about a balance between the activities on the surface and in the deeper ocean. Once we become aware of this totality, we begin to experience peace. For this reason the spiritual traditions say that peace cannot be purchased outside, but must be discovered inside.

Spiritual aspect of yoga

Peace defines the spiritual nature of an individual. The more peaceful you are, the more spiritual you are because you are in

touch with the source of your being. Being peaceful does not mean that you stop being active in the world; rather it means you have a greater responsibility to be an active participant. Discovering your spiritual nature means coming closer to the source, discovering the spiritual nature inside, which brings you closer to your philosophy of life and to God.

Being spiritual is different to being religious. A religious nature identifies with the object of faith and devotion, whereas the spiritual nature identifies with the state of peace felt inside. Movement from the physical and material to the mental and psychological and to the spiritual and transcendental is the aim of yoga. No matter where we start, whether with physical postures or meditation, the aim is to move from physical to spiritual identification.

Water the roots of life

Once a young child was given the task of looking after a garden. Every day he would look at the trees, plants, flowers and fruits, wipe the dust from the leaves, remove the insects and polish the fruits, but he never watered the plants. Do you know who the child is? All of you! You look after your body if there is a pimple on it, you strive very hard to fulfil a desire, and you project a different front to others, but you never water the roots of your life. If the roots are not watered, no matter what you do to the leaves, flowers and fruits, the tree will fall when there is a tempest. But if you water the roots regularly, it will stand for hundreds of years and continue to blossom and give fruit regularly. Yoga is the art of watering the roots of life so that our existence becomes more creative, optimistic and all-encompassing, and so that rather than being blown out by the winds of problems, the flame of hope remains alive all the time.

Experiencing the Fullness of Life

University of Balearic Isles, May 19, 2004

If we analyze eastern and western cultures, we can see a clear distinction. One developed the external sciences and technologies and the other developed the mental, spiritual and subtle technologies. Ancient Japanese and Chinese traditions, Indian traditions and other Asian cultures lived very close to nature. They did not manipulate nature to suit their needs and lifestyle, but lived according to natural principles. Modern technology was developed in the West. Air-conditioning and refrigeration systems originated in the West, whereas the majority of people in India today still live under the sun, sometimes not even in a house but under the trees. There is a disparity between the two cultures. One can be described as affluent and comfortable and the other not so affluent or comfortable. Despite this social imbalance, people accept their condition. Even a beggar has the philosophy that if he does not get food for one or two days, it is God's wish, and he will not steal to satisfy his needs.

How and why did this mentality develop? Eastern cultures looked inside to discover the source of life and were eventually identified as spiritual societies, while Western cultures looked outside and were eventually identified as materialistic societies. However, the material and the spiritual do not negate each other because they cannot exist without each other; they are like two arms of the same body. Some people are right-handed and others left-handed, and that is how we need to look at the growth of these two civilizations.

Cultures that looked inside found that by being contented in mind and heart, they were better able to face life's difficulties. One of the *niyamas* prescribed in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* is *santosha* or contentment. Being happy with what you have is part of the belief structure of Asian societies. In other parts of the world, contentment means pursuing an ambition. When you pursue an ambition, there is struggle, which you believe will result in contentment. So you tend to identify more with the struggle, with contentment being the light at the end of the tunnel, which cannot be reached. However, Asian traditions and cultures teach how to live and experience contentment from the beginning. Therefore, we find that most philosophies related to personal growth and universal harmony have emanated from the East.

Purpose of life

What is the purpose of life? In the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, there is a beautiful statement:

*Om poornamadah poornamidam poornaat poornamudachyate,
poornasya poornamaadaaya poornamevaavashishyate.*

It means that we come from fullness and our direction in life is to attain fullness. Fullness is always complete; it is the destiny of humanity. Whether you add fullness to fullness, subtract fullness from fullness, multiply fullness by fullness, or divide fullness by fullness, the result is always fullness.

Fullness is the total awakening and development of the mental, emotional and vital forces. In the twentieth century, people talked about IQ, intellectual quotient. A person's brilliance was measured by IQ; the higher the IQ, the more brilliant you were. But in this century people are talking about EQ, emotional quotient, as being more important than IQ. Yoga also talks about SQ, social quotient. We understand IQ because it is a linear, logical process, but EQ is abstract and creative. We also have to look at SQ, the social environment in which we live. The *yamas* and *niyamas* of yoga refer to IQ, EQ and SQ. For example, *shaucha*, purity, is SQ; *santosha*, contentment, is EQ; and *satya*, truth, is IQ. The *yamas* and

niyamas provide an understanding of the mind, emotions and social environment, and practising them helps us to find our balance.

Sometimes the yamas and niyamas are defined as moral codes of conduct. Maybe from the modern perspective they are, but from the perspective of spiritual development they are states to be acquired and experienced. The foundation stone of yogic philosophy is contentment, also known as *ananda*, bliss. The word *ananda* is included in the name of many sannyasins. *Ananda* also means being free from the limiting conditionings which inhibit the development of the mind and heart.

Ashram culture

In the past, it was the tradition in eastern cultures for children to spend a few years living in an ashram. Ashrams or gurukuls were the schools, colleges and universities of the time. Sixty-four subjects were taught, related to science, arts, commerce and spiritual experience. Ashrams were not just spiritual places where one had to think about nature, the universe and God, enquire 'who am I' and so on. Understanding the social sciences and living according to spiritual principles was a very important part of education in the ancient ashrams. Students would go there to educate not only their mind, but also to understand life's deeper purpose. However, when modern schools influenced by western ideas developed, ashram culture receded into the background.

There is a passage in the *Ramayana* describing how Rama and his three brothers lived in the gurukul with their guru like ordinary students, leading hard and disciplined lives. The prince of a great empire, used to every luxury and comfort, slept on the ground, went barefoot and did all the hard, menial work that a wealthy person would not normally do. The guru's wife once said to the master, "You are very tough on the students. Children are soft and you are driving them too hard." The guru replied, "You also have to educate them. I will teach them how to face hardships and become strong, and you will teach them to connect with the

softness of the heart. Otherwise their stay in the ashram will be incomplete.”

This tradition is mostly lost now, but in some countries it has been kept alive. In Thailand for example, it is an unwritten rule that everyone, male or female, must spend some time in a Buddhist monastery prior to marriage. It can be a month or a year, the choice is yours. In the monastery, you live like a resident, shave your head, don the red robes of the Buddhist monks, and every morning follow their routine, taking a bowl and begging at five houses. Even princes and princesses followed this practice. This is ashram life, where you are exposed to a different environment and diverse situations, to disciplines which eventually help you to rise above the conflict and confusion of life. You are exposed to an understanding of how both the haves and the have-nots survive. You are exposed to the idea that you have to play out the role that has been given to you in life. You are exposed to the idea that your life is not only about living for yourself, but also about living for others. You are inspired to understand how to become selfless.

Living for the sake of others

Swami Satyananda has said, “My life is not mine to live. I am a disciple of Swami Sivananda, and from him I have learned that you live your life for the sake of others. If you sleep at night, you are sleeping for others, not for yourself. If you eat, you are eating for others, not for yourself. If you work, you are working for others, not for yourself. A river doesn’t drink its own water and trees don’t eat their own fruit, because the water and fruit are for others. Nature is selfless, only human beings are selfish. The outcome of this selfish nature is accumulation and possessiveness. When we are selfish, we try to accumulate many things that we feel are ours, but when we are selfless, we can possess them but be detached from them.”

When Paramahamsaji was in Rishikesh he received a lesson in selfless service from Swami Sivananda. Once, driven by the idea of renunciation, he decided to make do with the bare necessities and removed everything from the room he had

been given. He replaced the bed with a thin mat, removed the table and chairs as well as the cups and glasses, and started to live a very simple, basic lifestyle. One day Swami Sivananda came to inspect the room. He looked inside and ordered his secretary to bring back the table, chairs, teapot, cups, tea, coffee and sugar.

Paramahamsaji said, “But Swamiji, I don’t need these things. I don’t make tea for myself, I take it in the ashram kitchen. I don’t need chairs and tables, I can easily work on the floor.” Swami Sivananda told him, “These things are not for you, they are for people who visit you. Some people cannot sit on the floor and may need a chair. You may have to work with people who need to use a table. You may not need tea, coffee or sugar, but you should offer them to visitors to the ashram. Keep these things in your room, but have the thought in mind that they are for others, not for you.” That was Paramahamsaji’s first experience of selflessness, and it was given to him by his guru. He says, “The teachings of my guru continue to guide me even today.”

Duty to help others

We have to move from being selfish to being selfless. We also have to understand that our obligation and duty is to help others as much as possible. It is not necessary to be always thinking, “I have to help this person.” Sometimes it happens unconsciously. Once a sadhu performed many austerities to have God’s darshan. Pleased with the sadhu’s efforts, God appeared and told him to ask for anything he wanted, but now that he had seen God, the sadhu wanted nothing more, and walked away. So God granted the power of healing to the sadhu’s shadow, which worked miracles wherever it fell. A blind person regained his vision, a lame person began to walk, but the sadhu remained oblivious. That is also a way of living selflessly. You do not know what is happening, but miracles are taking place behind your back. When there are no self-oriented expectations or desires, all the energies of the universe are at your command.

The other side of the coin is shown in the following story. A man came to Paramahamsaji one day and said, “I want you to be my guru. I am ready to offer you my body, my mind, my life.” So Paramahamsaji initiated him, and told him he could go home, and he would call him when he needed any assistance. That man had a beautiful mango orchard. When the mango season came, Paramahamsaji sent a swami with the message, “Send two hundred mangoes for the ashram residents.” The man sent back the following message, “Please tell Swamiji that I have given him my body, my mind and my life, but not my mangoes!”

Discrimination and non-attachment

In yoga, the two words *viveka*, discrimination, and *vairagya*, non-attachment, are often used. The word *raga* means attraction and *dvesha* means repulsion. Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* state that raga is seeking pleasure and happiness and gravitating towards objects that will provide that satisfaction. We are attracted to whatever gives us pleasure and we reject whatever gives us pain and suffering. It is a normal human trait to avoid anything that gives us pain and try to obtain something that gives us pleasure. Our life moves between pleasure and pain, attainment and loss. Raga and dwesha are the two shores of the river of life.

When we think about *viveka* and *vairagya*, discrimination and non-attachment, we can begin to understand how we function. Discrimination involves knowing, awareness. Without awareness, discrimination does not exist. Awareness means having the ability to differentiate between what is appropriate and inappropriate. It is the same with *vairagya*. *Vairagya* is being non-attached to the things we possess and which surround us. In other words, *vairagya* is not being attached to pleasure. If it comes or not, well and good. These two conditions are attainable through the *yamas*, *niyamas* and meditation. Yoga begins with the *yamas* and *niyamas* for this purpose only, so that we begin to prepare our mental ground.

Stages in the yogic process

Today people tend to identify yoga as asanas, physical postures, because there is more identification with the body than in the past. But asanas are only one-tenth of the entire process of yoga. The purpose of asanas is to prepare the body and activate the pranic energy so it can be used for mental and emotional development. Awareness has to be utilized to bring about a change in the mental and emotional states. Therefore, the aim of self-realization is a very distant reality in yoga. In the *Yoga Sutras* Patanjali has described self-realization as the eighth stage of yoga. If it were easily attainable, he would have made it first or second or third. But he said that first people have to develop the quality of mind which will help them to understand the process of life and to harmonize their performance.

Patanjali used the concepts of viveka and vairagya, which are attainable by practising the yamas and niyamas, the first and second components of ashtanga yoga. When you reach a point where you begin to understand discrimination and non-attachment, then you begin to work with your body. Therefore, asanas are the third component in ashtanga yoga. After modifying the mental attitudes and awakening the physical energy or prana, effort is again made to reform the mental and emotional awareness and provide the mental energies with a direction through the practices of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana, the fifth, sixth and seventh stages of ashtanga yoga. Only when the mind is at peace with itself will it experience its true nature. Experiencing one's true nature is known as samadhi.

Even in samadhi, one has to go through ten stages to reach the final state. The word samadhi comes from *sam*, meaning balance, and *dhi*, meaning intelligence, so *samadhi* means balanced, harmonious intelligence, stable wisdom. Samadhi is a stage where one lives according to what one knows. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna asks Krishna, "How can you describe a person who has attained enlightenment? How does that person walk, talk, eat, sleep?" Krishna replies, "Just like an ordinary person. He eats like us, walks like us and talks like

us; the only difference is that he is established in wisdom.” One who has become established in wisdom is an enlightened being, not one who has seen God. Even when one sees God, one is not established in wisdom; one is still pursuing the flow of emotions and desires.

If you analyze your own relationship with God, what are you looking for in that connection? Happiness? Fulfilment? You are searching for solutions to overcome your problems, and that is what you pray to God for. So you are actually seeking the fulfilment of a desire from God. God is seen as a miracle worker, not as someone who is part of your life and of whom you are a part. Very few people pray, “Lord, please forgive me because I forgot that you are present everywhere. I looked for you in temples and churches, not remembering that you are omniscient. As you are omniscient, there is no need for me to keep telling you my problems and difficulties.”

We have a concept of God, but we do not act accordingly. We think God is omniscient, yet we want to ensure that he knows all our problems. We think he is all-powerful, but we want to ensure that he uses his power to help us attain our goals and aspirations. Therefore, to become established in wisdom is the real state of enlightenment. Stable wisdom can be attained by developing the qualities of viveka and vairagya.

Let us keep these two ideas in mind and see how much discrimination and non-attachment we can apply in our lives. Our journey into yoga begins with the purpose of finding stability in our wisdom, using the tools of discrimination and non-attachment, and trying to experience the process of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

Australia 2005

Yogic Traditions

Satyananda Yoga Mangrove, 25–28 March

Sydney Yoga Expo

2 April



Redefining Yoga

Welcome to the world of yoga, where every day there is a new realization that it is possible to improve the quality of our lives and to tread the path of dharma. As long as we have this realization, we are connected with the spirit of yoga. This is what we have to learn, believe and live. It is also the trademark of Sivananda Yoga and Satyananda Yoga.

We will begin our discussion on yogic traditions by reviewing yoga in relation to the *Bhagavad Gita*, Samkhya and Vedanta. By looking at traditions allied to yoga, we are able to understand what we can offer, not just what yoga can offer us. The *Bhagavad Gita* is one support for the development of the human personality. Samkhya and Vedanta are other supports to discover the cosmic plan and how to attain higher consciousness. Let us begin by redefining and re-understanding yoga.

Awareness of conditioning

Yoga is defined as harmony and balance at all levels of human expression and existence, from senses to mind to spirit. However, in order to come to a state of harmony, we have to recognize the conditioning which makes us what we are, which forms our personality, our nature. Throughout our life, from the moment we are born until we die, we are subject to different conditionings. The moment there is contact between the senses and objects, a conditioning comes into existence. All the pairs of opposites come into play: attraction, repulsion,

like, dislike, possessiveness, detachment. Becoming aware of this conditioning begins with yoga.

When you practise asanas, you become aware of the physical conditioning, how far your body can bend and twist. Physical stiffness is a conditioning. Mental rigidity is a conditioning. Fixity of thought, feeling, emotion, expectation and desire is a conditioning. From the yogic perspective, the first item in our life is always the state of conditioning that exists at all levels – physical, sensorial, mental, psychological, emotional, psychic, spiritual, familial and social. This conditioning makes us happy or unhappy; we either accept and appreciate the beauty of life or not. Awareness of this conditioning is known as being the *drashta*, the seer, the witness, as stated in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. Who is the *drashta* and what does it see? Who is the observer and what does it observe? It has been said that the first thing you observe is the conditioning which controls your behaviour physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. Recognizing one's conditioning is the beginning of yoga.

Three stages of yoga

Yoga has three stages. The first stage is awareness of the conditioning. The second stage is discovering the antidote to alter that conditioning, a method, a system, a process, which can free you from that conditioning, or which can enhance it, so that you flower more and more. Everyone has the wisdom to decide which conditioning is restrictive and which is uplifting, which quality is desirable and which holds you down. Discovering the process to either enhance or transform and transcend the conditioning is the second component that we confront in our life. The third stage is applying and propagating it, living it, being it.

These three stages are part of our yogic experience and understanding. If they are our focus in life, then the practice of hatha yoga has a special purpose; the practice of bhakti yoga, karma yoga, raja yoga, mantra yoga and all the other yogas has a specific meaning and a goal. It is not an abstract goal, but an attainable, transformative goal. That is the system of yoga.

Yoga can be construed as a lifestyle, or as a philosophy, or as a scientific process of development and self-improvement. You are free to choose. However, when all the psychological and inner spiritual transformations are taking place and altering our conditioning and behaviour, then yoga naturally becomes a part of our lifestyle, how we think, respond and react, how we manage ourselves in adverse situations, how we recognize our own peace and stability. Yoga becomes a part of our daily behaviour and routine, and therefore it becomes our lifestyle. This seems to be the right understanding of yoga. No matter what you do, whether you practise hatha yoga or raja yoga, pratyahara or dharana, mantra, karma yoga or bhakti yoga, practise it as a drashta, an observer, seeking enhancement and transformation.

These three stages are the traditional ones defined in the yogic texts. The first three sutras of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* describe three stages of yoga. Patanjali defines a conditioning as a *chitta vritti*. The vrittis or conditionings govern our behaviour and expressions. According to the *Yoga Sutras*, analysis of the conditionings, discovering how to alter, transform or enhance them, is known as *chitta vritti nirodha*. Applying the method to enhance the potentials and qualities is known as drashta, becoming established in one's own nature. Other yogic texts describe the process of yoga in a similar manner before going into the practices. So, remember these three points and apply them at all levels of life, whether physical, mental or emotional.

The physical, mental and emotional imbalances and their influences on our body, mind and performance are conditionings. Our drive to transform and transcend our limited self is also a conditioning. Buddha also said that eventually, in order to be self-realized, the desire to become self-realized has to be given up. One has to overcome the conditioning that is motivating one towards self-realization and experience freedom while walking that path. We apply conditioning at all levels, in health and illness, in pleasure and pain, in participation and escapism, as well as in our responses at interpersonal, personal and social levels. So awareness

becomes the main component, leading to recognition and management of those situations to uplift ourselves.

Yoga today

Nowadays yoga is a very broad term. In today's world anything can be yoga, so it does not really mean anything except a philosophy, a principle and a lifestyle. That philosophy, principle and lifestyle is modified by different masters according to present needs, so that it can be understood and incorporated in our lives. That modification to the original system represents a tradition. A tradition always begins with one person, who is the *siddha*, the perfected being.

The Sivananda tradition begins with Swami Sivananda; the Satyananda tradition begins with Swami Satyananda. One person becomes the source of inspiration. In our tradition Swami Sivananda is the satguru, the *siddha*, the source of inspiration. The next in line to become our inspiration is Swami Satyananda, who has fulfilled the mandate of Swami Sivananda by creating, designing and establishing a system of yoga which is sequential, practical, simple and far reaching.

Satyananda Yoga is an evolving, practical process to enhance the qualities and potentials of the human personality. Yoga by itself is a philosophy, a principle and a lifestyle. The philosophy of yoga has been adjusted so it can be understood according to today's needs. The lifestyle has been modified so that it can be lived by people today. The principles are there so they can be incorporated into our life system. The method we have adopted has been created by Swami Satyananda, one of the pioneers of the yogic tradition.

Many people practise yoga as exercise, as gymnastics. Many branches of yoga have emerged, each in accordance with a need. The need can be financial and also spiritual. The motivating factor in Swami Sivananda's life or in Swami Satyananda's life has been the need to bring about a state of mind in which a different quality of life can be experienced. For this, they dedicated their lives to *sannyasa*. For this, they have developed yoga with the understanding that it is not only a practice for physical or sensorial contentment, or mental

upliftment. The practices of yoga are a means to develop a particular awareness which helps one to go through and overcome the dualistic conditions of life and find balance and harmony.

Therefore, Swami Satyananda emphasized the need to combine awareness with every activity, whether asana or karma yoga, to understand and manage one's attitudes, behaviour, thoughts and feelings. He not only taught, but has lived a life which represents that level of understanding and achievement. We have to develop an understanding of yoga, not only as theory, but also as a practical system to be applied in our lives.

Bhagavad Gita

Chapters 1–6

We have discussed the three principles of yoga which begin with conditioning. Conditioning alters our personality. In its eighteen chapters, the *Bhagavad Gita* describes the evolution or progression of the human personality from the state of despondency, hopelessness and despair that one feels when subject to the dualities of life, attraction and rejection. That is the normal experience of every human being. The *Bhagavad Gita* defines the process of transforming one's behaviour by promoting positive qualities to enhance and evolve the personality. Therefore, we are discussing the *Bhagavad Gita* in relation to yoga. All the chapters are interconnected. Each chapter indicates different behaviours, transformations and levels of understanding that one can develop, before coming to a point where one identifies totally with the auspicious nature of the spirit.

Chapter one

The first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is *Vishada Yoga*, the yoga of despondency. Despondency enters our life because of our conditioning. Recognizing our conditioning is the first step in the yogic process. We have to recognize that despondency, depression, elation, anxiety, frustration and happiness are all manifestations of our conditioning and our attachment or association with it. If we love somebody, it is because of the conditioning between the sense and the object which manifests in the form of attraction, affection,

love. If we dislike somebody, it is again an association of the sense with the object, which brings forth another experience of rejection, repulsion, dislike or avoidance. So, despondency is the outcome of the conditioning which normally we cannot control, as we are subject to the behaviour of the conditioning. How then do we overcome this conditioning? How can we extract ourselves from the magnetic pull of the conditioning?

The story begins with two groups of people who are fighting for their rights: the Pandavas, or five brothers, and the Kauravas. Both groups are related, but the Pandavas have been denied their right to inherit the kingdom. That is what the war is about. On the battlefield, Arjuna, the warrior, sees everyone standing ready to fight, die or win. When he sees them, he undergoes mental conflict and begins to rationalize. We are here, demanding our right to inherit the kingdom. We are fighting for that right and the other side is also fighting for that right. Why do we want a kingdom? For prosperity? For pleasure? To establish our right to be rulers? In this process, if everything is going to be destroyed, if people are going to be killed, what will be the ultimate pleasure after winning the war? Our friends and family will either be dead or injured, so for whom am I fighting this war? If my near and dear ones are destroyed, will I find pleasure in that? What will I do with an empty kingdom? This is where Arjuna loses the plot of dharma. Confusion enters the picture.

The theme of the first chapter is encapsulated in verse 33, in which Arjuna is thinking:

*Yeshaamarthe kaankshitam no raajyam bhogaah sukhaani cha
Ta ime'vasthithaa yuddhe praanaamstyaktvaa dhanaani cha.*

Those for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyments and pleasure stand here ready to fight, having renounced life and wealth.

Once you enter the battlefield, you are ready to confront death, so you renounce life. You renounce your wealth because if you are killed, what use is wealth? Being on the battlefield ready to fight, having renounced your attachment to life

and your association with wealth, is a very difficult state of mind to manage and understand. What is one's role in that situation? Can it be managed more efficiently, or do we have to go through that process of death and destruction? In the second chapter, Krishna comes to enlighten Arjuna.

Chapter two

The second chapter is *Samkhya Yoga*, the yoga of sequential knowledge. *Samkhya* means sequence. A sequence indicates an order of succession, a series of things following one another in order. If you look at the numbers one to ten in sequence, you find that in each subsequent number the number one is added: one plus one becomes two, two plus one becomes three, and so on. That is the sequence, that is evolution, the growth of life. But if you mix the numbers, the chain is broken, and the numbers have no logical sequence. So Samkhya means the sequence in which one is added all the time. Samkhya represents the map of life, of existence, of one's relationship with the inner nature and with the transcendental nature.

Krishna gives this map of life to Arjuna, saying, "You are here, recognize where you are, and live according to the dharma of the present, the here and now, not according to the needs of your emotions and desires." Develop an overall view. Develop a complete picture of life, of your responsibilities, dharma, obligations and aspirations, and recognize that there is a sequence in life. The sequence is evolution and growth. If there is no sequence, there is no logic. Recognizing that there is a sequential progression of life and dharma and karma is the message of the second chapter.

Dharma means righteousness; dharma does not allow you to tread the path of unrighteousness. Without dharma, you can be both righteous and unrighteous, good and bad, nasty and delightful, but if you live according to dharma, then you have only one path – the path of righteousness. So recognize where you are and live the dharma of the present, but also know the sequence, the progression you have to experience and go through in order to realize that freedom within from the attachments and associations that bring you pain, trouble

the mind and create suffering, anxiety and distress. The second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* provides the map for living a spiritual life.

The main statements of the second chapter are in verses 14 and 38. Why does despondency happen? In verse 14, Krishna states:

*Maatraasparshaastu kaunteya sheetoshna sukhaduhkhadaah
Aagamaapaayino'nityaastaamstitikshasva bhaarata.*

Contact of the senses with objects which cause heat and cold, pleasure and pain, have a beginning and an end; they are impermanent; endure them bravely.

In verse 38, Krishna says:

*Sukhaduhkhe same kritvaa laabhaalaabhau jayaajayau
Tato yuddhaaya yujyasva naivam paapamavaapsyasi.*

Having made pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, the same, engage in battle for the sake of battle; thus you will not incur sin.

The second chapter talks about the pairs of opposites which influence our mind, emotions, feelings and actions. As long as we are influenced by the pairs of opposites, we identify and associate with them, but if we can be free from their influence, then there is clarity of mind. Depression and elation will lead to particular mental behaviours, but if there is no depression or elation and we are balanced, the mental perceptions become different. Managing the opposing pairs is the focus of the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Chapter three

The third chapter is *Karma Yoga*, the yoga of action. The first factor involved in managing the conditionings of life is performance and action, attitude and behaviour. Karma here does not mean physical or sensorial activity, but covers the entire personality. The projections and expressions of the conditioned personality are karma, and the projections and expressions of the personality free from attractions

and vrittis are also karma. Bondage is karma and freedom is karma, because life is karma. We may say we are alive because of the life force, but we are alive because of karma. Karma is the life force, the destiny, the direction in which we are all moving. It is the blueprint of our life; we are not directionless. The blueprint of life is karma, at both the physical and transcendental levels. Karma is the actual cause of conditioning because that conditioning is inherent in the blueprint of karma.

Karma yoga means recognition of the karma, gradually, at all levels. Begin with the physical karma: how it affects your mind, how it creates disturbance and distress, how it can again bring you happiness and fulfilment, and what kind of attitudes you need to maintain to fine-tune the karmas. This is the training of karma yoga. In karma yoga, we confront many situations which at times can be frustrating, but we must understand that we are the cause of our frustration. When we communicate something, we expect and believe that the other person knows as much about the subject as we do. We don't come down to their level because we are proud of our knowledge. Then later on, when things don't happen as we wish, there is frustration, anxiety, anger, distress and disturbance.

Understanding karma and not being influenced by it, by adding the word yoga, is the subject of the third chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. That is the first sadhana. Be aware of your performance. Be aware of your karma. Be aware of how you react and respond to situations, and whether it is limiting or uplifting. If you can do that, you are a karma yogi, because you will find your balance in action. When you find your balance in action and become a karma yogi, you attain one rung on the ladder of yoga.

Everything in life is governed by karma. Karma does not mean action that you perform through your senses or sense organs, through the hands, legs, eyes or mind. Karma means the ongoing sequential activity which covers existence and creation, at a higher level and at a gross level. We identify with that karma because there is always an expectation of an outcome.

The main theme of the third chapter is in verse 19:

*Tasmaadasaktah satatam kaaryam karma samaachara
Asakto hyaacharankarma paramaapnoti poorushah.*

Therefore, without attachment, always perform actions which should be done, for by performing action without attachment, one reaches the Supreme.

By performing actions without expectation and attachment, one reaches the supreme state of contentment and harmony. This relates to the recognition of how the outer behaviour alters the peace and stability of the self, disturbs the passivity of the self and brings out the aggressiveness of the material world. Action means identifying with the aggressiveness of the material world; inaction means identifying with the passive or stable nature of the inner self. Once you identify with the stable nature of the self, naturally the expectations and desire for results will gradually stop dominating your life, and you will free yourself from the karmas.

Chapter four

The fourth chapter is *Jnana Karma Yoga*, the yoga of action and knowledge, understanding the karmic process, cause and effect. We reap what we sow, so let us plant positive, virtuous qualities that will be useful to us and will nourish our life, not negative qualities. Fruits are better than thorns, because fruits will definitely nourish life. While performing karma, be knowledgeable of the outcome of the karma, and ask if that outcome is what you ultimately desire. We do many things as a reaction, feel guilty and sad later on, and blame ourselves for having done it. Is that what we ultimately expect from our involvement? If that is not the expectation, then why not develop the ability to manage the situations, influences, actions and behaviours to get the desired result? Adding the component of knowledge and wisdom to karma is the second step as defined in the fourth chapter.

The important statement of the fourth chapter is in verse 20:

*Tyaktvaa karmaphalaasangam nityatripto niraashrayah
Karmanyabhipravritto'pi naiva kinchitkaroti sah.*

Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of action, ever content, depending on nothing, one does not do anything though engaged in activity.

Before renunciation there has to be understanding and awareness of the karmas or actions. One has to become the *drashta*, or observer, of the karma. How? By realizing one's attachment to the fruits of the action. As long as you are the *drashta*, you are content, but if you become involved, then you subject yourself to the influences of the karmas: sadness, happiness, frustration, anxiety, motivation, inspiration. As long as you are able to witness them objectively, you are at peace with yourself, free from the influences of the karmas. So perform actions without any attachment to the outcome.

The fourth chapter continues in verse 22:

*Yadrichchhaalaabhasantushto dvandvaateeto vimatsarah
Samah siddhaavasiddhau cha kritvaapi na nibadhyate.*

Content with what comes, without expectation and effort, free from the pairs of opposites and envy, even-minded in success and failure, though acting, one is not bound by the karmas.

This is the realization that one has to develop by following the path of *juana yoga*, by observing and analyzing the interactions, responses, motivations, expectations and desires. Observe them, manage them, and be free from their effects.

If you are at the airport and you keep looking at your watch, wondering when the departure call will come, it will not speed up your journey. At that time your role should be to just sit back and relax, knowing that eventually the plane will take off and the journey will be completed. But if you keep feeling anxious about the journey, that is involvement. The anxiety does not hasten the journey, which will happen in its own time. When you are in a situation, be relaxed – that is the attitude that needs to be developed. Don't try to achieve

something, because you will overstrain yourself and develop certain conditionings, expectations and desires, which, if not fulfilled, will again lead to anxiety and depression. So awareness and understanding of the actions is the theme of the fourth chapter.

Chapter five

The fifth chapter is *Karma Sannyasa Yoga*, the yoga of renunciation of action. Once you have become aware of your karmas and their outcome, take sannyasa from them, renounce them. Don't carry the burden on your shoulders. Leave behind what is unnecessary and take what is useful. Leave the association with the negative karmas, with your tamasic self, and lighten your karmas. Connect with your positive and sattwic self. Once you have identified what distresses you and what uplifts you, then renounce the undesirable. Lighten yourself through karma sannyasa by leaving the association with the negative karmas and your tamasic self and connecting with your positive, sattwic self. The excess baggage drops in karma sannyasa. You renounce the undesirable karma; there is no need to hang onto it even in memory. What is gone does not come back in your life.

Even in memory we hang on to an undesirable karma. We carry the memory of the bad more than the memory of the good, which makes us respond in a more intense manner. So it is not just the karma you are renouncing, but also your association with the karma that remains in you in the form of memory. Performance and memory have to be seen together; the instrument of the act and the impression it leaves behind, the rubber stamp. You can throw away the rubber stamp, but what will you do with the imprint it has left behind? You can renounce an action, but what about the memory? The concept of sannyasa or renunciation of karma is at both levels. Even the memory of the restrictive, negative, tamasic conditioning has to be released. That is the true meaning of karma sannyasa. Karma sannyasins must remember this, because it should be your sadhana, apart from asana, pranayama and meditation.

We encounter many bumps in life, and we carry the burden with us. So start with little things. Before shifting the furniture, first we need to sweep and clean the floor, otherwise the dust will go deeper into the furniture upholstery and create extra work. We make the mistake of trying to shift the furniture without cleaning, without purification. The understanding and awareness has to come that we need to free ourselves from negative and restrictive conditionings. Making the effort is karma sannyasa, not being initiated as a karma sannyasin, but practising the systems of karma sannyasa.

In verse 11, Krishna states:

*Kaayena manasaa buddhya kevalairindriyairapi
Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktvaatmashuddhaye.*

Karma yogis, having abandoned attachment, perform actions only with their body, mind, intellect and senses, without the feeling of mineness, simply for the sake of self-purification.

Take the example of a farmer who prepares the ground, plants the seeds and cares for them until they sprout and fruit. The farmer performs the karmas, and naturally there is an expectation of a good outcome. At the same time, there is no control over the other elements that are responsible for the maturing of the seed. The role of the farmer is only to create the right conditions. So you have to create the right conditions, and then the seed will sprout automatically. Although you are involved in activities, there are many factors you cannot control. So be involved yet don't identify.

That is the concept of renunciation. You don't renounce everything. Remember this carefully. You renounce what is undesirable, the excess baggage, and travel light. Go through your bag thoroughly. If you can manage to travel with two sets of clothes instead of twenty, your bag will weigh only six kilos, not forty. Do you want to lug forty kilos around on your back, or just carry six kilos in your hand? The choice is yours. That is the concept of renunciation. Let go of the undesirable.

Don't be obsessed by an undesirable event or situation, but learn to let it go and not carry it with you.

Think about how much extra baggage you carry. Extra baggage creates a negative emotion, a frustrating experience, anxiety and desire, which becomes another conditioning. So renounce what is unnecessary. You can leave behind what is unnecessary if you identify with the present moment and don't dwell on memories, expectations and future desires. That is renunciation of karma. In fact, it is karma sannyasa and the sadhana for karma sannyasins. Do everything you are doing, but be aware of what you are doing and free yourself from the influences of those actions.

Chapter six

The sixth chapter is *Dhyana Yoga*, the yoga of meditation. *Dhyana* means meditation. Now look at the progression. After the introduction in the first chapter, comes the sequential understanding of life, then knowing the karmas that govern our life and performance, then analyzing them, and then letting go of the baggage. Then comes dhyana yoga, the yoga of meditation.

When you are attempting to let go of the excess baggage, the meditative process has to be applied. The aim of the meditative process is stated in verse 23:

*Tam vidyaad duhkhasamyogaviyogam yogasanjnitam
Sa nishchayena yoktavyo yogo'nirvinna chetasaa.*

Severance from union with pain is dhyana yoga. Dhyana yoga should be practised with determination, with a mind that is not despondent.

As long as you are attached to the pairs of opposites, you are united with pain and pleasure. In meditation, you cut the connection with pain. That becomes the focus of meditation, and only then do you begin to experience peace and tranquillity, harmony and balance. As long as there are connections, if you identify with pain and suffering, there cannot be harmony and balance. One side of the scales will always be lower than the

other. Pain and suffering is the major cause of imbalance in our lives. Happiness does not create imbalance. So the purpose of meditation is to cut the connection with the pain that is associated with the pairs of opposites.

Severance from union with pain is dhyana yoga. If you want to succeed in meditation, then verse 23 is the sutra you have to follow. Practise meditation with determination and a mind which is not despondent. When you practise meditation, identify not with the hopelessness of life but with hope, not with weakness but with strength. Identify with the quality of life. So the process of meditation described here is to connect with the positive, optimistic self.

The process of meditation is further described in verse 24:

*Sankalpaprabhavaankaamaamstyaktvaa sarvaanasheshatah
Manasaivendriyagraamam viniyamya samantatah.*

Abandoning without reserve all desires born of thought and imagination, and completely restraining the whole group of senses from all sides by the mind.

This is the theory of pratyahara: restrain and control the senses. Verse 25 continues:

*Shanaih shanairupamedbuddhyaa dhritigriheetayaa
Aatmasamstham manah kritvaa na kinchidapi chintayet.*

Little by little, attain tranquillity by holding the intellect firmly; having made the mind establish itself in the Self, one should not think of anything (else).

That is dharana. Holding the intellect firmly becomes dharana; establishing the mind in itself becomes dharana. When you have gone through the practices of pratyahara, where you abandon all desires born of thought and imagination and restrain the senses, and when you have gone through the practices of dharana, holding the intellect firmly and making the mind establish itself in itself, then dhyana begins. Dhyana is disassociation of the self from the experiences of pain and identification with the state of joy. That is the theme of the sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the yoga of meditation.















Bhagavad Gita

Chapters 7–12

Chapter seven

The seventh chapter is *Jnana Vijnana Yoga*, the yoga of wisdom and realization. Here *jnana* has been identified as wisdom, and *vijnana* as realization, knowing and believing it to be that. Krishna has made a beautiful division between *jnana* and *vijnana*. He says that *jnana* is related to the material world and *vijnana* is related to spiritual experience.

In verses 4 and 5, Krishna explains to Arjuna the range of *jnana* and the range of *vijnana*.

*Bhoomiraapo'nalo vaayuh kham mano buddhireva cha
Ahankaara iteeyam me bhinnaa prakritirashadhaa.
Apareyamidastvanyaam prakritim viddhi me paraam
Jeevabhootaam mahaabaaho yayedam dhaaryate jagat.*

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego – this is My Nature (Prakriti) divided eightfold. This is the inferior Prakriti, O Arjuna; know that as different from My higher Prakriti (Nature), the very life element by which this world is upheld.

The range of *jnana* or wisdom is eightfold. Everybody has an eightfold nature comprising earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego. These eight components, which are present in anyone who has taken birth and is a life member of this planet, represent the lower, manifest *prakriti* or nature. As human beings we revolve around these eight components

of prakriti, from body to mind to ego. That is our nature. Understanding these eight components which control, rule and govern us in the manifest state is jnana, wisdom.

Vijnana is the higher Prakriti, or Nature, the life element which upholds the macrocosmic world. We live in the microcosmic dimension, we create our own worlds, but beyond our own world there is a universal dimension. The universe is upheld by that cosmic Prakriti. We have to develop this realization, to see that we are connected with the cosmos. This realization is the outcome of a meditative process that has to be undergone before one is able to distinguish and differentiate between the manifest and universal components of life and see the connectivity and relationship between them. This understanding of jnana, the lower prakriti, and vijnana, the higher nature, will provide an understanding of the imperishable consciousness, the subject of the eighth chapter.

Chapter eight

The eighth chapter is *Akshara Brahma Yoga*, the yoga of the imperishable Brahman. Brahman does not mean God or Creator. *Brahman* means the consciousness which is continuously evolving and imperishable. It does not die; it is the continuity of existence, the continuity of time, space and object. It is the realization of that cosmic existence which has to be experienced in this life.

In verses 3 and 4, Krishna states:

*Aksharam brahma paramam svabhaavo'dhyaatmamuchyate
Bhootabhaavodbhavakaro visargah karmasanjnitah.
Adhibhootam ksharo bhaavah purushashchaadhidaivatam
Adhiyajno'hamevaatra dehe dehabhritaam vara.*

Brahman is the imperishable consciousness, the Supreme; its essential nature is Self-knowledge. That sacrificial offering which causes existence and manifestation of beings and which also sustains them is called karma, action. Knowledge of the elements pertains to My perishable Nature and knowledge of the embodied spirit and its connection with the cosmic Self is knowledge of Brahman.

Knowledge of the perishable self: the body, the senses, the ego, the intellect, which only exist as long as we are alive, is knowledge of the perishable self. Then there is knowledge of the imperishable Self, the ever-evolving, ever-expanding consciousness. Instead of identifying with that which will perish in the course of time, one develops an awareness and understanding of that which does not fall apart, but sustains the whole universe and is the cause of creation, the cause of life. This is the theory given to indicate another dimension and aspect of perception that has to be developed.

Chapter nine

The ninth chapter is *Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga*, the yoga of the important science and secret. *Raja* has been defined as 'kingly', but in this context it means 'important'. *Rajavidya* means the important science, and *rajaguhya* means the important secret. What is this important science and important secret?

In verse 3, Krishna tells Arjuna the secret:

*Ashraddadhaanaah purushaa dharmasyaasya parantapa
Apraapya maam nivartante mrityusamsaaravartmani.*

Those who have no faith in this dharma, or knowledge of the Self, O Arjuna, return to the path of this world of death without attaining illumination.

Those without faith in the dharma of knowing the Self return again to the world of death, to the cycle of birth and death. We are under the influence of this cycle as long as we identify with the pairs of opposites. There is so much identification that we are unable to extract ourselves, so we are caught up in this vicious cycle. There is no understanding of the higher Self, of the higher purpose of life. We are just living for our own sake, for our pleasure, needs and desires. When we have become the focus of our life, at that point there is no self-knowledge. When we are caught up in the cycle of birth and death, we come back again and again. We cannot free ourselves from the influence of birth and death.

What is the secret? Have faith in the dharma of knowing oneself. Here Krishna uses the word dharma, meaning it is an obligation for the welfare of the spiritual being within you to realize its role in life. Just as you know the role of emotion, intellect, desire, pain and pleasure in your life, you have to know the role of knowing your higher self.

Chapter ten

The tenth chapter is *Vibhooti Yoga*, the yoga of divine attainments. Krishna describes these attainments in verses 4 and 5:

*Buddhirjnaanamamasammohah kshamaa satyam damah shamah
Sukham duhkham bhavo'bhaavo bhayam chaabhayameva cha.
Ahimsaa samataa tushnistapo daanam yasho'yashah
Bhavanti bhaavaa bhootaanaam matta eva prithagvidhaah.*

Intellect, wisdom, non-delusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint, calmness, happiness, pain, existence or birth, non-existence or death, fear and also fearlessness, non-injury, equanimity, contentment, austerity, beneficence, fame, ill fame – (these) different kinds of qualities of beings arise from Me alone.

Krishna tells Arjuna that if one has faith in the dharma of knowing the Self, then different kinds of qualities or traits emanate from within. These qualities are known as *vibhootis*, divine attainments, and are the virtues you attain when you are able to establish yourself in yoga. In verse 7, Krishna says:

*Etaam vibhootim yogam cha mama yo vetti tattvatah
So'vikampena yogena yujyate naatra samshayah.*

One who in truth knows these manifold manifestations of My being and this yogic power becomes established in the unshakeable yoga. There is no doubt about it.

So when you have gone through this process and the personality has been further refined, the positive virtues manifest in your life. These positive attributes are the attainments.

Chapter eleven

The eleventh chapter is *Vishwaroopa Darshan Yoga*, the yoga of the vision of the cosmic form. All this time Arjuna has listened to Krishna and in verse 3 he now says:

*Evametadyathaatha tvamaatmaanam parameshvara
Drashtumichchhaami te roopamaishvaram purushottama.*

Since You are an enlightened being, O Supreme Lord, I wish to see Your universal form.

Krishna shows his universal form to Arjuna. Seeing it, Arjuna is terrified because he cannot perceive any beginning or end to it. Imagine that for a moment you lose body consciousness and gain universal consciousness. It would terrify you, because the sudden loss of the sense of body and mind and the gain of the universal sense would create an enormous disruption in the normal behaviour of the human experiencing it. So when Krishna showed Arjuna the universal form and said, “Look, everything is the cosmic Self,” Arjuna was terrified. In verse 46, he prayed, “Stop! Show yourself to me as before, show me your original being.”

*Kireetinam gadinam chakrahastamichchhaami tvaam drashtu-
maham tathaiva
Tenaiva roopena chaturbhujena sahasrabaaho bhava vishva-
moorte.*

I desire to see You as before, crowned, bearing a mace, with discus in hand, in Your former four-armed form only, O thousand-armed, Cosmic Form.

This statement can be seen from another perspective. When you are transforming your basic nature, at a particular moment you lose connection with your grounded self. Suddenly, an abstract awareness develops; it is not a concise or precise awareness, and our mind is not capable of dealing with that abstract awareness. It needs to have a name, a form and a quality, which are the three attributes of the mind. The mind will only function if it identifies with either name, form or quality. If these attributes are lost, if there is no name, form

or quality, it is like suddenly finding yourself deep in the middle of the ocean without an oxygen mask – you will panic.

This is what happened to Arjuna. Suddenly he found himself without any basis or support, without any ropes to hang on to connected with the body or mind. He just had this terrifying experience that everything was gone and he had become universal. So he prayed to Krishna, “No, I don’t want this. Let me see you as you were before.” This is a real experience. Samadhi is not desirable because this is what will happen to you in samadhi. It is like saying, “I want to be warm.” The sun is the source of warmth. So you fly towards the sun like Icarus in Greek mythology. As you get nearer and nearer, from warm you become hot, from hot you begin to burn, and from burning you dissolve.

So is going near the sun desirable? Is attaining samadhi, moksha or self-realization desirable? If you are willing to let go of yourself and just burn up completely, go ahead and become one with that, fuse all your atoms in that. But if you have to live and play your role in this life, then you have to reconnect with your body, and if you reconnect with your body, that is left behind and no longer desired.

To clarify this point, Swami Satyananda once said that we are searching for the transcendental with an untranscendental mind. How can the transcendental be understood by the non-transcendental mind? A single cup cannot contain the waters of the ocean. Our mind is like the cup, and the transcendental reality is like the ocean. If you put the cup in the ocean, it will eventually disappear and no one will know where it has gone. However, if you have to again use the faculties of the body, senses, mind, ego and intellect, to continue living in this world, then at some point that experience also has to be rejected. Have the understanding, have the experience, but come back.

Chapter twelve

The twelfth chapter is *Bhakti Yoga*, the yoga of emotional transformation. Prior to chapter 12, Krishna has spoken of transforming the human personality by following the course

of karma, action, and meditation, reflection and introspection. Chapters 1 to 11 cover the aspect of human participation in the world. The themes: the yoga of sequence, the yoga of action, the yoga of action and knowledge, the yoga of renunciation of action, the yoga of meditation to balance out the influences of actions, and all the subsequent yogas up to chapter 11 deal with karma. They define the role of karma and ways to manage the karmas by developing and reconditioning our faculties and motivations.

It has been recognized that the world is dominated by karma. Karma has been given many names: life may be called karma, destiny may be termed karma. One cannot imagine a life without karma. Karma gives rise to afflictions and sorrows, or pleasure and contentment, and our life revolves around the influences of these karmas. So first we have to learn how to manage the karmas at the physical, mental and sensorial levels. This is dealt with in the first eleven chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The emotional component comes in the twelfth chapter.

In the twelfth chapter, Krishna moves into another dimension – bhakti. *Bhakti* is not devotion, it is managing the emotions. How can one manage emotion? In verse 2, Krishna states:

*Mayyaaveshya mano ye maam nityayuktaa upaasate
Shraddhayaa parayopetaaste me yuktatamaa mataah.*

Those who fix their mind on Me (the higher Self), ever steadfast and endowed with supreme faith, are the best in yoga in My opinion.

That is bhakti, according to Krishna. There is not much difference between bhakti and dhyana. Dhyana is meditation, and bhakti is also one-pointed focusing. The only difference is that in dhyana you work with your mind, whereas in bhakti you work with your heart. But focusing, coming to that state of one-pointed awareness, is the purpose of both dhyana and bhakti. In dhyana you bring the mind to one point; in bhakti you bring the emotions to one point.

Swami Satyananda has said that emotions are raw energy, energies that have not been channelled. These emotions arise as the result of a mental association with an object. If there is a bag of money lying in the ground, it will generate the feeling of greed. The relationship between parent and child evokes the emotion of affection. The relationship between lovers evokes the emotion of love. The relationship between two adversaries evokes animosity. In this way, you can identify all your emotional reactions in terms of the relationship. When the same emotions are directed inwards to discover the inner self, that is known as bhakti.

Bhakti does not mean devotion, chanting or singing God's name. Bhakti means diverting the emotions from outer movement to the inner dimension where you free yourself from the external associations of affection, greed, envy, jealousy, hatred, compassion and so on, and find yourself centred by identifying with the cosmic existence, by knowing your universal nature. The focus is on redirecting the energies and fixing or concentrating them on the inner experience.

Whatever your level of experience may be: stillness, a feeling of peace, joy, happiness and fulfilment, whatever the feeling that dominates you and helps you focus yourself to experience that within becomes bhakti. Just as external objects evoke different emotional responses, inner stability also evokes a specific emotional response, which is known as bhakti. Bhakti is a system of emotional management and transformation with nine stages or steps.

Bhagavad Gita

Chapters 13–18

Chapter thirteen

The thirteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is *Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga*, the yoga of distinction between the field and the knower of the field. *Kshetra* means dimension, *kshetrajna* means knower of the dimension, *vibhaga* means division, and *yoga* means union. The field is the dimension of *chetana*, unmanifest consciousness. In verse 1, Krishna tells Arjuna:

*Idam shareeram kaunteya kshetramityabhidheeyate
Etadyo vetti tam praahuh kshetrajna iti tadvidah.*

This body, Arjuna, is called the field; one who knows it is called the knower of the field, by the sages who know of both.

What are the fields of the body? Verses 5 and 6 describe the field and its modifications:

*Mahaabhootaanyahankaaro buddhiravyaktameva cha
Indriyaani dashaikam cha pancha chendriyagocharaah.*

The great elements, egoism, intellect, and also the unmanifest nature, the ten senses and one mind, the five objects of the senses, desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, intelligence, fortitude – thus has the field and its modifications been briefly described.

The body with all its attributes is the field in which the spirit, the knower, lives. It is this field that we have to work with.

If life is a combined experience of body, mind and spirit, then the field, our farm, becomes the body, mind and spirit. So the ten senses: the *karmendriyas*, organs of action, and the *jnanendriyas*, organs of perception, belong to the body; the elements represent the body; desire, hatred, pleasure and pain represent the mental aspirations, attainments and experiences; humility, forgiveness and righteousness represent the strength of human character. This is the field. We have to recognize that the whole of life is a field.

Here a map of life is given. Life is seen in the form of a field, and you are the owner. If you want to become the knower of the field, you need to clean yourself up. If you have a plot of land and want to create a garden, you have to remove the debris and weeds, plant flowers and fruit trees, decide where the path will be. It is yours to do with as you please, to care for or neglect. It is your decision and your choice, and it has to become your inspiration and motivation. That field, this body, with all its attributes and modifications is yours to use. How you develop this field of existence is up to you. You have the ability to convert your life into a beautiful garden, so don't let it become barren. Chart out your path, become the knower of the field, and not only the knower but also the master of the field of your life. It is a map of life. This is life, these are the modifications of your existence, of your spirit, of your nature. Realize these modifications and learn how to manage them.

Chapter fourteen

The fourteenth chapter is *Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga*, the yoga of the division of the three gunas. *Guna* means 'quality', *traya* means 'three' and *vibhaga* means 'independence'. The three gunas; sattwa, rajas and tamas, represent three different modifications of the same nature, so there is an independent quality inherent in each one. Every tradition states that human nature is governed by these three qualities.

In verse 5, Krishna describes how this field, this body, this existence, is controlled and governed by the three gunas, by three different kinds of actions, resulting in a different experience.

*Sattvam rajastama iti gunaah prakritisambhavaah
Nibadhmanti mahaabaaho dehe dehinamavyayam.*

Purity, passion and inertia – these qualities, born of Prakriti, Nature, bind fast in the body, the embodied, the indestructible.

Purity represents *sattwa*, passion represents *rajas*, and inertia represents *tamas*. These three qualities are born of nature, prakriti; they are inherent in nature, and they bind fast the body. They are like the glue that holds the character, the body, the senses and the mind together. If the gunas were to disappear, everything would disintegrate.

From *sattwa* arises knowledge, from *rajas* arises greed and disillusionment, and from *tamas* arises ignorance and heedlessness. Here Krishna tells Arjuna that this field of the body, this field of existence, the dimension of human experience, is governed by these three qualities. Our aim is to become pure, but right now we are in a state of tamasic conditioning, and sometimes we resist any change that would alter our conditioning. Being unable to let go, feeling frightened and resisting any change to our conditioning represents *tamas*. We are used to our corner of the room and we don't want to leave it; we feel it is our place of power and we don't want to lose it. That is the tamasic nature. However, as yoga aspirants we have to move from *tamas*, using the strength of *rajas* to experience *sattwa*.

If *sattwa* is light, purity, *tamas* is darkness, inertia. *Tamas* is also referred to as *avidya*, ignorance, absence of knowledge. When we are embodied, contained in this body, nature, personality and mind, then we experience *tamas*. The body, the mind and the feelings represent *tamas*, a conditioning we are living, an identity we have created, not only socially, but also as an individual being. I am what I am. I have not yet become 'That'. The three gunas manifest in every expression of this field, in interactions, in personal thoughts. Your thoughts can be *sattwic* or positive, *rajasic* or passionate, *tamasic* or destructive. The intensity of your emotion is also *sattwic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*, and each represents a modifi-

cation. It is like a beautiful statue being sculpted from stone, from total inertia to a beautiful form, from tamas to sattwa. The stone is still the same, but a transformation, an alteration, has taken place. The person is still the same, but a modification has taken place in thinking, believing, understanding, responding, in every form of behaviour. This is the movement from tamas to sattwa, which becomes the aspiration of every yoga sadhaka.

The fourteenth chapter describes how the gunas interact in the material world. Food can be sattwic, rajasic and tamasic. Heavy tamasic food depletes the body of energy and produces inertia. Rajasic food burns the stomach. A light sattwic meal produces vitality, regulates the bodily functions and increases dynamism and alertness. Different qualities of food produce different experiences. It is the same with habits, with interpersonal relationships. Different kinds of dependencies develop, different attachments and certain expectations arising from these attachments develop, leading to an inability to understand the needs of others. In this way the three gunas regulate and influence our behaviour and life in every possible and conceivable manner. This is the recognition that has to come next in the process of transforming the human personality.

Chapter fifteen

The fifteenth chapter is *Purushottam Yoga*, the yoga of the transcendental spirit, the transcendental Self. The transcendental nature is free from the influences of pain and suffering, from the elations of pleasure and comfort, from the sway of the pairs of opposites. In verse 11, Krishna states:

*Yatanto yoginashchainam pashyantyaatmanyavasthitam
Yatanto'pyakritaatmaano nainam pashyantyachetasah.*

Yogis striving for perfection identify with the transcendental nature dwelling in the Self; but the unrefined and the unintelligent, even those striving for perfection, see Him not.

This statement defines the theme of the fifteenth chapter, because it refers to the efforts made by both kinds of people –

the refined, knowledgeable being and the unrefined, ignorant person. Both are striving, but the refined being, the yogi, identifies with the transcendental Self. That is the meaning of yoga. Gradually, you refine yourself more and more. While you are improving yourself, if you identify with that transformative inner nature, it will carry you along with it and you will keep on progressing. You will just be catching one wave after another.

However, for the unrefined person, even though he is striving, the mind is not there, it is elsewhere. He wants simple and quick solutions, but is not willing to fine-tune the personality. That person is seeing all the channels on one television screen, and is unable to focus on one because too many scenes are flashing together at one time. There is no choice of channels because of the distractions and disturbances that afflict us. In this statement it has been made clear that even though you are striving, you have to ensure that you are not distracted and disturbed. You have to fine-tune yourself and ensure that you are able to see only one image on the screen.

Chapter sixteen

The sixteenth chapter is *Devasura Sampada Vibhaga Yoga*, the yoga of the division between the divine and the demonical. *Deva* means ‘divine being’, and *asura* means ‘demon’. In verse 6, Krishna tells Arjuna:

*Dvau bhootasargau loke'smindaiva aasura eva cha
Daivo vistarashah prokta aasuram paartha me shrinu.*

There are two types of beings in this world, the divine and the demonical.

The divine and the demonical are the two main natures in human beings. We can opt to either go the divine way or the demonical way. These are the only two options; either you live a divine life or a demonical life.

In verses 1 to 3, Krishna describes to Arjuna the characteristics of the virtuous, divine being:

*Abhayam sattvasamshuddhih jnaana-yogavyavasthitih
Daanam damashcha yajna-shcha svaadhyaya-stapa aarjavam
Ahimsaa satya-makrodhastyaagah shaantirapaishunam
Dayaa bhootesha-loluptvam maardavam hreerachaapalam
Tejah kshamaa dhritih shaucha-madroho naatimaanitaa
Bhavanti sampadam daiveemabhijaatasya bhaarata.*

Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga, giving, control of the senses, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, straightforwardness, non-violence in thought, word and deed, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride – these belong to one born for a divine state, O Arjuna.

In verse 7, Krishna describes the character with demonical qualities:

*Pravrittim cha nivrittim cha janaa na viduraasuraah
Na shaucham naapi chaacharo na satyam teshu vidyate.*

The demonical know not what to do and what to refrain from; neither purity nor right conduct nor truth is found in them.

Demonical means confused, not bad; one who has fallen from grace, like Satan who was once an angel. When we fall from grace, the confusion creates a state in which we do not know what to do, what to refrain from. Neither purity nor right conduct nor truth are qualities found in a demonical character. So there are two ways to go, divine or demonical. We have to strive to go the divine way, so that we remain connected with truth, with righteousness and purity.

Chapter seventeen

The seventeenth chapter is *Shraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga*, the yoga of the division of the threefold faith. *Shraddha* means faith. Krishna tells Arjuna that faith is the greatest strength one can have to embark upon this journey and to complete it.

Faith is the outcome of determination, a positive inspiration, a positive motivation, of a heart which identifies with what is virtuous and positive. Faith is also affected by the three gunas, as stated in verse 2:

*Trividhaa bhavati shraddhaa dehinaam saa svabhaavajaa
Saattvikee raajasee chaiva taamasee cheti taam shrinu.*

Threefold is the faith of the embodied, which is inherent in their nature – the sattwic (pure), the rajasic (passionate) and the tamasic (dark).

There is sattwic faith, tamasic faith and rajasic faith. If you are rajasic in thinking and behaviour, your faith will be rajasic. If you are tamasic, your thoughts will be destructive; even your faith will be used to destroy others or yourself. Threefold faith is inherent in our nature.

Krishna continues in verse 4:

*Yajante saattvikaa devaanyaksharakshaamsi raajasaah
Pretaanbhootaganaamshchaanye yajante taamasaa janaah.*

The sattwic or pure worship the gods; the rajasic or passionate worship the yakshas and the rakshasas; the others (the tamasic or deluded people) worship the ghosts and the hosts of the nature spirits.

A sattwic person worships the luminous gods, the illumined beings, the *devas*. It is not a religious concept, but a concept denoting realization of the different states of consciousness, where one can exist as a divine being, an illumined being. In illumined states of existence, the actions, thoughts, ideas, concepts and lifestyles are illumined and they uplift. Illumined means something which is uplifting and enlightening, which removes the darkness.

A rajasic person worships *yakshas* and *rakshasas*, ethereal beings: “Please fulfil my wish and I shall do this, please fulfil my wish and I shall do that.” The rajasic tendency is to look to angels and fairies for support and guidance. That is rajasic faith. Tamasic or deluded people worship ghosts, the dark stuff. They have faith in it. If they can believe in Satan, why

can't they convert that faith to believing in God? It means their faith is misguided, which is tamasic faith. So here you have to be careful by cultivating the *drashta*, the witness, the observer, to ensure that your faith is sattwic. You should have that much ability to control yourself. You should have the strength to direct any imbalance or deviation in your life, and come back onto the right track.

Chapter eighteen

The eighteenth chapter is *Moksha Sannyasa Yoga*, the yoga of liberation by renunciation. In verse 10 Krishna states:

*Na dveshtyakushalam karma kushale naanushajjate
Tyaagee sattvasamaavishto medhaavee chhinnasamshayah.*

The person of renunciation, endowed with purity, intelligence and with his doubts cut asunder, who does not hate disagreeable work, nor is attached to agreeable work, is balanced.

That is *moksha*, liberation, freedom. It is a very interesting concept of freedom. What is freedom? Freedom is not rejection. You try to free yourself from whatever has bound you. If a rope binds you, you free yourself from the rope. If ideas bind you, you free yourself from those ideas. If attachments bind you, you free yourself from those attachments. If your fears bind you, you free yourself from those fears. That is an indication that you have to cut something to be free of it. However, here the concept is that you accept everything. You maintain your equanimity, peace and balance. One who is able to maintain balance, who has renounced the desire to be pulled by the pairs of opposites, is a renunciate.

We wish to suffer and therefore we suffer. We wish to experience joy and therefore we experience joy. We wish to undergo pain and we undergo pain, due to our involvement, participation and attachment. These things will continue to happen as long as we live in this body. What is the law of the body? Digestion happens by itself, the heart beats by itself; you don't control them. Often you can't even control something

more tangible like your speech. It is this balance which indicates freedom, realizing that you have to live according to the rules of the body; it is not letting go of something. Instead of being pulled the pleasurable way or the painful way, keep your path straight. Then you will be free from the attractions of good and bad, proper and improper. The moment you are balanced in this manner, you are free. That is actual freedom, not cutting anything.

In verse 12, Krishna states:

*Anishtamishtam mishram cha trividham karmanah phalam
Bhavatyatyaginaam pretya na tu sannyasinaam kvachit.*

The threefold fruit of action (evil, good and mixed) accrues after death to the non-abandoners, but never to the abandoners.

The threefold fruits of action are evil, good and mixed. They accrue to those who are unable to abandon their link with the negative and restrictive self, their connection with their attachments and the modifications that arise in this field of life, who crave for love but are unable to give love, who crave for forgiveness but are unable to forgive. For such people, who cannot let go and strive for perfection, the fruits of the actions accumulate. Those who are able to let go and are free from the pulls and attractions of good and bad, the pairs of opposites, become free. That freedom is the ultimate growth, the ultimate flowering of the personality.

So, in these eighteen chapters, Krishna has given a very clear model of freedom. The *Bhagavad Gita* represents the transformation of human personality, and yoga is an aid in this transformation.

Bhagavad Gita

An Overview

The *Bhagavad Gita* provides a model of human personality development. Its eighteen chapters deal with the inner transformations in attitude, behaviour, perception and understanding that one has to experience on the spiritual journey, beginning with despondency about the purpose of life and ending with identification with the transcendental nature.

Chapters 1–6

In this world we live at one point, in one location. We create another world around us with our associations, and we identify with those associations. When our expectations and ambitions overpower our wisdom, we are affected by our attainments and losses. This fluctuation between attainment and loss leads to a natural despondency, which becomes like the outer area of our dimension, of our existence, the environment of the planet. This is due to our conditioning. Conditioning represents the interplay of the *vrittis* with each other, which leads to *vishad*, dissatisfaction, the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. At that point we try to look for possible solutions to overcome the causes of our despondency. The search for a solution begins here. This is the theme of the first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Chapter two is Samkhya Yoga, the yoga of sequential knowledge. As a meditative process, develop the ability to know, recognize and witness the sequence of events, influences and conditionings that exist in your life. This is the first

step in finding the solution, in regaining one's balance and overcoming the state of despondency with greater clarity, understanding, creativity and wisdom. Develop this as a meditative process to discover yourself.

Chapter three, Karma Yoga, the yoga of action, defines how to hone the skills of the actions that we perform in time, space and location, developing and furthering our creativity and participation in life, not running away from life.

Chapter four defines Jnana Karma Sannyasa Yoga, the yoga of action and knowledge. Realize that actions as karmas govern life and existence at all levels. The body experiences natural karmas over which we have no control, like digestion, respiration, excretion, blood circulation, heartbeat, etc. There are conscious karmas that we can control, which are the outcomes of our interactions. Then there are unconscious karmas, at the non-sensorial, more subtle level, the cosmic, universal level. Karmas are the reason why there is existence. If there were no karmas, there would be no life. So the actions we perform through the senses and mind have to be realized first.

In chapter five, Karma Sannyasa Yoga, the yoga of renunciation of action, follow the instructions on how to get rid of the excess baggage. Leave behind the undesirable and carry forward the desirable, the strengths and qualities that uplift you and hold promise.

To come to the culmination of realization at the worldly level, at the physical and mental level, we have to follow the path of meditation, which is the theme of the sixth chapter, Dhyana Yoga. Meditation becomes the means to disassociate and separate oneself from the pain caused by suffering and to connect with the joy of living.

Chapters 7–12

As meditation deepens, an awareness dawns which knows the difference between the impermanent and the permanent, between the transitory and the eternal. That is Jnana Vijnana Yoga, the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In meditation, as the consciousness deepens and you disassociate yourself

from the pain of suffering, you transcend experiences one by one. You realize whether an experience was permanent or just an event that happened at some time, in some space, in some location and has gone never to return again, and has no influence on you. So why carry the burden of the memory with you and suffer? *Viveka* or discrimination between the eternal and the impermanent is developed through this meditative process.

Once you have the ability to discriminate between the eternal and the impermanent, there is a natural inclination to recognize or identify with the eternal, which you really are, the idea of *Tat Tvam Asi*, I am That. Recognize the eternal to be who you really are by connecting with the permanent source of inspiration, joy and motivation which allows you to perform your karmas without any expectation or desire for a result. Karma simply becomes the medium for expressing your creativity and perfection. There is no identification with the outcome, but there is identification with how to enhance the creativity more and more every second. That is the theme of the eighth chapter, Akshara Brahma Yoga.

The ninth chapter, Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga, says that the secret of life, in order to succeed or achieve, is adherence to *dharma*, virtue and righteousness. As long as you adhere to the path of dharma, you are free from suffering because you are not becoming the cause of pain or suffering either for others or yourself. You have found peace, balance and equilibrium. Without this balance, dharma is non-existent, because dharma represents what is righteous and virtuous. Wherever there is righteousness and virtue, there is bound to be peace, not confusion; there is bound to be clarity, *sattwa*, purity and luminosity. There is no return to the path of *adharma*, unrighteousness.

Chapter ten is Vibhooti Yoga. By adhering to dharma, desirable accomplishments or *vibhootis* are attained. Thinking in the right manner is an accomplishment. Being able to restrain oneself from negative outbursts is an accomplishment. Being able to sleep peacefully at night is an accomplishment. Being able to maintain courage in the face of difficulties is

an accomplishment. Faith is an accomplishment. Willpower is an accomplishment. The ability to sit still physically for two or three hours is an accomplishment. Being able to communicate is an accomplishment. Being able to think properly is an accomplishment. Being able to live properly is an accomplishment. Do not think of accomplishments as something great that you are able to achieve, but as little things that you can achieve and express in your day-to-day, normal, routine affairs. That is the meaning of accomplishment, and they are attained by adhering to dharma. One identifies with these accomplishments, one lives them, one becomes them. There are many historical examples of people who have lived virtuous, disciplined, spiritual lives.

When you are able to live a virtuous, disciplined, spiritual life, cosmic awareness develops. This is the theme of the eleventh chapter, Vishwaroopa Darshan. The awareness then transcends the selfish self, the self-centred being, and the radar is extended outwards into the heavens, ready to receive any signal coming from any source. When you are able to direct your inner radar towards the space which contains you, and you are ready to receive any signal coming from there, that fine-tuning of yourself is the beginning of the development of cosmic consciousness in you.

As you identify more and more with the inner self, the source, a natural refocusing and rechanneling of energy takes place, and consciousness becomes fixed on the realization of divine grace. At present the energy is flowing outwards, and we are the result of that outward flowing energy current. Our senses are flowing outwards, our mind is flowing outwards, our attention is flowing outwards, our requirements are taking us outwards. We even want to find peace, happiness and fulfilment outside. Everything is happening on the outside, nothing on the inside. But in Bhakti Yoga, the subject of the twelfth chapter, the focus, the attention, is turned. It is more difficult to practise. It is more difficult to practise bhakti yoga in its pure form than it is to practise raja yoga.

Bhakti has nine stages, and as you progress through these nine stages, consciousness also evolves. It identifies more

and more with energy. In the final stage of bhakti, there is *sayujya*, final union, the merger between consciousness and energy. That union of the individual self with the higher Self is internal because you continue to exist in the body, but your consciousness is connected to the higher Self. You are aware of the higher Self just as a mother is always aware of her baby despite the other activities she is performing. No matter what she is doing or what the baby is doing, that link is permanent. Whenever the link perceives a threat, the mother immediately ensures the baby is safe and secure, and then returns to her work without breaking the connection. That is the kind of connection that exists between the individual self and the higher Self. At that level one is known as a *siddha*, a *bhakta*.

Chapters 13–18

As you further evolve and progress in bhakti, you come to realize that your life is the farm in which all the evolutes have a role to play. That is the theme of the thirteenth chapter, Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga. God or transcendental consciousness is the knower, the container of knowledge. God has given you the strength to beautify your farm, so do not leave it barren.

Remember that a farmer is dependent not only on the quality of the earth and compost, but also on the weather. The weather, the earth and one's effort are the three important components. In the same manner, in this farm of life, there are three important components: the three *gunas* which direct the structure and experience of one's existence. This is the theme of the fourteenth chapter, Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga.

The ground is *tamas* on which everything is generated. Matter can hold water, it can ensure the growth of trees, it supports the building you create. Matter is the final element on which every other element can build itself into a form, a shape. *Tamas* is that matter, that nature, the area of the farm you have received, the barren ground, resisting any change, full of rocks and thorns. How deep are you going to dig? You don't even know the depth of the rock, yet work has to happen on the farm. Break up the rock to a depth of maybe

one, two, three or four feet, fill it with good topsoil, and start producing. When you have all the skills and abilities, then why not? The soil represents *tamas*; your *purushartha* or effort represents *rajas*; and grace, the weather, the cosmic element, represents *sattwa*. These three components control all levels of human existence and experience.

With this understanding of the role of the three *gunas*, in the fifteenth chapter, Puroshottama Yoga, one develops a universal vision of living life from the perspective of an illumined consciousness. That becomes you, you become That. No part of the body remains dry when you dive under the water. When you have submerged your individual self, your individual consciousness, and developed a level of transcendence within from the basic inherent tendencies, then you are a different person, a more mature person. Just as one matures from childhood, to adulthood, to death, there is maturity of consciousness as well.

Each state in this process of awakening brings us closer to the plan that the higher consciousness has for us, as a creative person, as its instrument. In creation, everything has a purpose. Even a piece of bamboo, when hollow and punched with seven holes, is capable of producing a beautiful melody when it is played. Even a rock can be transformed into an object of worship. Everything, inanimate as well as animate, has a purpose. As human beings we have the ability to alter and shape our own destiny, and make choices that uplift us and motivate us to tread the balanced path.

Therefore, follow the inspiration of living the divine life. Krishna said many times to Arjuna, “Become thou a yogi, O Arjuna. You are a warrior; live out your dharma of being a warrior.” Arjuna can still be a yogi by living out his dharma of being a warrior. Just as you have a role to play in your society, family, home, club, ashram, etc., at the same time as playing these roles, you can be a yogi, a person who strives to attain transformation of the personality. This is the theme of the sixteenth chapter, Devasura Sampada Vibhaga yoga.

Shraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga is the theme of the seventeenth chapter. With that faith and conviction, you understand

and manage the levels of existence; your mind disassociates from its likes, dislikes, attractions, repulsions, needs, ambitions and weaknesses, and manages them. They continue to exist, but your perception of how to manage them is changing and maturing. They do not disappear, because as long as there is a body and mind, there will be pulls and pushes between the pairs of opposites. So accept that and know how to manage by observing your own behaviour and seeing that it adheres to the principles you have followed in this journey from the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* to the seventeenth.

Then go on to the eighteenth chapter, Moksha Sannyasa Yoga – transcendence, righteous living, righteous thinking, righteous behaviour and virtuous character. *Atma deepo bhava* – be the light within yourself. Be happy, enjoy life, laugh and love.

Samkhya and Yoga

Samkhya is an important philosophy because it forms the foundation of the Indian philosophical tradition as well as being the basis of the yogic tradition. Samkhya is a process of enumeration, a logical sequence of elements that form a certain pattern. Samkhya has outlined a very systematic structure of creation, comprising a total of twenty-five evolutes or elements, twenty-five different stages of evolution.

So Samkhya describes the evolution of creation, whereas yoga, tantra and other systems of self-development describe involution. Yoga provides the practical means to elevate our level of consciousness, and Samkhya tells us what to expect as we travel on our inward journey. We begin the journey in the gross body, in the gross elements, and work systematically back to a higher understanding. By understanding the evolutes, and following the map given by Samkhya in our journey back to the source, we end up with a higher vision, a vedantic vision.

Prakriti and Purusha

What are the evolutes? What is the map we have to follow? The first two elements are not created, but create. The first is pure consciousness, *Purusha*. Purusha is equivalent to Shiva in Tantra and Atman in Vedanta. The second uncreated element is pure, unmanifest energy called *Prakriti* or *Moola Prakriti*, the root source of all creation. From these two principles everything else springs.

Prakriti is sometimes described as the feminine power and Purusha as the masculine power, but this is an incorrect interpretation. Just as strength is inherent in the body, just as warmth is inherent in luminosity, similarly energy is inherent in consciousness. Just as strength is contained in the muscles and manifests when the muscles are applied to perform a certain activity, consciousness and energy are to be perceived in the same manner. Therefore, consciousness is passive. However, when that consciousness undergoes a change, the change becomes the catalyst to induce an altered state of knowledge, perception, living, creating, acting. This transition from one state to the next happens with the aid of energy. So energy becomes the medium, and is known as Prakriti.

The passive consciousness is known as Purusha. Purusha, the soul, is the content of the container, the body. Therefore, Samkhya speaks not of one Purusha but of an infinite number of Purushas, an infinite number of containers holding the component of consciousness. The body is the dormant receptacle of consciousness. In Sanskrit the definition of Purusha is *Puri shete iti purushah*. *Puri* means a form, a dimension, an area, and *shete* means dormant. Purusha is that which resides in a form or container and is inactive in the manifest dimension. At the microcosmic level, each life form is a Purusha, each life form contains a Purusha. An elephant is a Purusha, a bird is a Purusha, a reptile is a Purusha, human beings are Purushas. The component of consciousness, Purusha, is inherent in each life form but is dormant, inactive.

Prakriti is the medium of expression of consciousness. The word Prakriti is derived from *pra*, denoting intensity of action, plus *kriti* meaning to perform. Prakriti denotes an action, a movement, the emergence of something which did not exist before. So Prakriti is the transformation of one state of consciousness to another.

Purusha and Prakriti are not two independent realities; they are not separate from one other, they are one and the same. Purusha is the *swarootpa*, the eternal content, the eternal form, the eternal nature. Prakriti is the *swabhava*, the

inherent nature, the manifestation of individual behaviour. As a person you are recognized by a name. You encounter situations where you express different emotions such as anger, love, hatred, compassion. These expressions are confined to a specific time and space; they are not continuous. Anger is not permanent; it is there for five minutes, ten minutes, a month, then it gradually goes away. So it is the individual person who brings forth anger, compassion and love. This is the role of Prakriti, bringing forth the evolutes from consciousness.

The three gunas

At this level of Samkhya nothing is yet in existence. It is all just before creation. In this plane three forces, sattwa, rajas and tamas, the three *mahagunas*, or great attributes of nature, are balanced and not part of expression. The three gunas are the inherent nature of the creative force, Prakriti, where they are in perfect balance with each other. There is no combination, no mixing of any other gunas to create a form, shape, idea or identity. They are latent, existing in the form of possibilities, but are not perceived or recognized because there is perfect balance.

These three gunas will now create a world, a universe, a macrocosm and a microcosm. Tamas will create structure, sattwa will create luminosity and rajas is momentum. In individuals, it will create different classes of beings, animals, birds, reptiles and so on. Within the whole of nature there will now be twenty-three evolutes. Purusha and Prakriti are the two fundamentals, from which twenty-three components will manifest.

Buddhi, ahamkara, manas and chitta

The first of these elements is buddhi. Buddhi is often construed as intelligence, but the beginning of buddhi is self-awareness. Intelligence evolves out of self-awareness. So, at this point, when the gunas are in perfect harmony with each other, contained in Prakriti, the first stirring or awakening process in consciousness takes place.

Imagine that you wake up in the morning after a good night's sleep. While you were sleeping, you were in a state of unconsciousness, dormancy, not aware of your body, not aware of where you were, not aware of your environment. There was total absence of awareness, a state of inertia, *tamas*. *Tamas* is the first thing to emerge as an evolute. In the morning when your eyes open, a movement has taken place, a change has occurred in that state of inertia. Opening the eyes represents the dawn of awareness, instead of inertia. You are in it, but somehow you woke up. The process of waking up was triggered off not by the alarm or the sunlight, but by something deep inside. Opening the eyes is identified as awareness, which later evolves into *buddhi*, recognition.

Buddhi is not intelligence; it is awareness leading to recognition. When you recognize something, that is your *buddhi*. *Buddhi* is a process of recognition. Opening the eyes in the morning is the emergence of awareness, and the emergence of recognition, a cognitive faculty.

The first self-awareness develops in *buddhi*, and as a result from *buddhi* arises *ahamkara*, the sense of identity, self-identification: "My body, my bed, my room." You gradually begin to identify with yourself: "I will spend a few more minutes in bed; I'm stiff." That gradual coming back into the body after deep sleep, that self-identification is *ahamkara*. *Ahamkara* is not the rigidity of the ego, but becoming aware of oneself.

From *ahamkara* comes *manas*. You say, "All right, time to get up," and you make the effort to move. First you connected with yourself, but now you are applying or encouraging your senses and your body to become active. That is *manas*. *Manas* deals with associations: "I need to get out of bed and have a shower"; "I need to have my breakfast, I'm hungry"; "I need to wear *geru* clothes because I am going to the ashram." *Manas* is responsible for these associations.

So *buddhi*, awareness and recognition, *ahamkara*, self-identity, and *manas*, interaction with our associations, are the three evolutes or progressions that we see in *Samkhya*, starting from *Purusha*. It is *Purusha* that has to wake up, not *Prakriti*.

While you are sleeping, Prakriti is maintaining your body, and Purusha is sleeping. Purusha, consciousness, has to wake up and become aware. Therefore, awareness and the recognition which comes from that awareness is identified as buddhi.

Together the three are known as chitta. Chitta is a peculiar play of three Sanskrit words: chit, chitta, chitti. *Chit* is eternal consciousness, *chitti* is the observer of that consciousness, and *chitta* is the modifications of consciousness. When you have come down from a harmonious state into an active state, from a dormant state to an awakened state, many modifications take place, many changes take place, many things begin to happen simultaneously, all of which constitute chitta, the modified state of consciousness, the modified state of recognition, the altered state of energy and consciousness which we are able to experience as motion, as mass and as inertia.

Self-identity

Ahamkara is also influenced by the three gunas. When ahamkara is sattwic, it gives rise to self-knowledge, 'I'. This self-identity creates the division between me and you. Take the 'm' from me and the 'y' from you, and you get 'my'. The selfish nature is the quality of the ego. If it is only me or only you, there is no selfish nature. If it is only me, I am content in me. If it is only you, then again there is no selfish nature because you are my focus and everything that is being done by me is for you. But when the 'm' and the 'y' come together, from this division selfishness emerges. That is a very important attribute to have if the mind is to survive in this dimension. One cannot live selflessly, one identifies with selfish qualities: "I need this, I want that, this is my choice, this is my will, this is my feeling." That is the first emergence of a very personal, strong self-assertive identity.

Now, this self-assertive identity has to have the instruments and capacity to project itself. It gains that ability by activating sattwa. When activated, sattwa becomes the cause of the ten *indriyas* or senses, comprising the five *jnanendriyas*, or cognitive faculties, and the five *karmendriyas*, or organs of action. These ten indriyas help the self-assertive ego to fulfil

its needs through cognition and action. The self-assertive ego identity has two areas. One is the area of expression and action which happens at the level of sattwa. The other area is identification with the existing reality, creation, which happens at the level of tamas. When ahamkara becomes tamasic, the five tanmatras and the associated mahabhootas come forth. Rajas activates these emanations and they begin to interact with one another. Rajasic ahamkara is the catalyst to complete this process of manifestation.

Tanmatras and pancha mahabhootas

What are the *tanmatras*, or subtle sense elements, and the *pancha mahabhootas*, or five great elements, that Samkhya talks about? The tanmatras: sound, touch, seeing, taste and smell, are the subtle essence or quality of the five gross elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. The tanmatras and the mahabhootas give rise to physical manifestation. The combination of different tanmatras is responsible for the emergence of the mahabhootas.

Suppose you have a television set with only five channels. When you turn it on, you see the image of one channel on the screen. If you keep turning the dial, you will see images of the other four channels, and that's it. Our body is like a television set with five channels. The mahabhootas or elements are the background programs that are running. The screen is being tuned by the dial, so it is the dial that connects you with the channel. The tanmatras and the pancha mahabhootas can be viewed in this manner.

Tanmatras are subtle sense elements, a conditioning. Any form of matter can be recognized as matter, whether it is soil, metal, wood, a leaf, a body or a rock. We recognize all of them as manifestations of matter. Any form of wind or movement is recognized as air, whether it is a gentle breeze or a storm. Each element, each tattwa in its total range of manifestations and expressions is identified by one tanmatra, one dial. The tanmatras are the dials which bring understanding and awareness of the tattwa that is active, and allow you to witness, modify or manipulate it. In the initial state

the gunas and tattwas are uncorrupted elements. However, in order to create something, you have to corrupt or modify the previous form. Whether you call it corruption, modification, change or alteration is up to you. But something which has changed is not the original thing any more; it is different, corrupted, modified. So, the emergence of the foundation stones of existence is the emergence of the pancha mahabhootas, the five elements. Tanmatra is the realization of that particular tattwa in all of its manifestations, so that the mental association with the world of sense objects is smoother and more refined.

If you see an object in a shop, you know if it is made of plastic, stainless steel, wood, china, glass or crystal. Nobody has to tell you that, because you have already identified it as an object derivative, a modification of the original matter. But if the tanmatra was not there, you would not be able to identify crystal from glass. So the tanmatras have to become active in order to realize the entire range of possibilities contained in a tattwa.

So we have a cosmic consciousness, an individual consciousness and an external world. For consciousness to interact in the external world, it has the karmendriyas and the jnanendriyas. The jnanendriyas: nose, tongue, skin, eyes and ears, send information continuously to manas, so there is a constant flow of knowledge about what is happening in the external world. The karmendriyas: genitals, anus, feet, hands and tongue, are the powers of expression by which we act in the world.

Samkhya and yoga

Rather than discussing cosmic theories, we have looked at the manifest component of the Samkhya system only because that is what is relevant to us. From Purusha and Prakriti, buddhi emerges; from buddhi, ego emerges; from ego, the interactive mind emerges; from ego, the bhootas or elements and the senses emerge. This is the theory of Samkhya.

Now, how does this relate to yoga or to our aspirations in life? It is a map of the personality, and a very good indication

of the universal psychology, because we are all subject to these sequences and conditions. Only our responses are different, but the basic nature is the same. There is a drive within everyone to feel satisfied at all levels: for example, at the material level of possessions, with a family, a nice house or a good car. This gives ego fulfilment. When contented, that self-assertive ego principle puts one on top of the world. When discontented, the same self-assertive ego puts one in Death Valley. This is the fluctuation that has to be managed because it disturbs the balance of creation, the balance of life.

So Samkhya becomes a map which you can look at when, for example, you say, "Today I feel very connected to sattwa." Why? Because you are identifying with your senses and directing them to do the right thing. Today you are identifying with clarity of mind, sattwa, and the world is looking brighter than it did yesterday. These mental states change according to our involvement with the different tattwas and the conditionings that we bring with us. According to every tradition, it is the conditionings which are the cause of pain and suffering.

For Buddha, nirvana meant freedom from pain, not God-realization or self-realization. He spoke of pain as the major conditioning that one has to transform and transcend. Samkhya, yoga and tantra also say that at our level, we are too involved in the fulfilment of our self-oriented and self-centred needs, aspirations and desires, and this involvement does not allow a broader vision to develop where we can be in harmony with ourselves, with nature and with the universe. Usually, there is no harmony, balance or peace within us. We identify with ourselves, but we aspire to find peace within, connect with nature and realize the divine. There are three stages here: finding peace within, connecting with the environment and realizing the transcendental state of existence. This movement, this thinking process, becomes the inspiration to work with ourselves and to modify the qualities of the tattwas and gunas, our attractions and conditions, to eventually find balance. Once the gunas are in balance, one disassociates from the pain of suffering.

Meditation is the means to overcome the pain of suffering. Suffering does not mean that you are writhing on the floor in agony. Suffering represents the transitory, impermanent nature of things, events and situations which do not allow you to focus on one thing, but keep on diverting your awareness and attention so that you can never find peace. Here Samkhya provides an understanding of the area in which you are working or interacting.

If you are working with buddhi, which components of buddhi are active at present, how do you manage them, and what will the desired outcome be, according to this map? If you are working at the level of the senses, how can the senses be transformed to experience luminosity, freedom and creativity, rather than being used to fulfil selfish greed? If you are working at the level of the interactive mind, manas, you watch the interplay of the senses, consciousness and objects. So Samkhya becomes a meditative understanding, a meditative analysis of the conditions that we encounter in our day-to-day lives.

Apart from being a philosophy, Samkhya is also a meditative process. In Samkhya the meditations are at the level of dharana meditations in yoga, because identification with inner conditions is taking place, not identification with the thoughts, mantra, body or posture. Samkhya meditations give rise to the perception of the inner self and the experiences that the inner self is having due to association with the senses, sense objects, mind, ego and so on.

SWAN meditation

The SWAN principle that we apply in our lives, the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs, has emerged from Samkhya meditations. SWAN is a Samkhya meditation, not a yogic meditation. In yogic meditations we focus on something tangible like the breath, thoughts, ideas, etc., but here we are working at a subtle level, trying to discover what our weaknesses are and how they restrict us, what our strengths are and how they can help to uplift us. We are working in a different dimension altogether, of modifying and altering the states of consciousness.

The SWAN principle is a meditative technique from the Samkhya system to discover how the inner personality interacts with the cosmic personality and how we can maintain a balance. Say you stand at an open door. Inside there is air-conditioning and outside it is hot. You are looking inside, so your front is cool, but your back is hot. It is the same body, but one part is feeling the cool breeze of the air-conditioning and another part is feeling the full heat of the midday sun. You are experiencing two things together, although the experiences are totally different.

Through Samkhya meditations you come to a point where you can develop an understanding of the subtle factors that govern your personality and see that they are both active. It is not one-pointed awareness; it is dual awareness. Normally, your awareness is one-pointed and you are not aware of two things at the same time. When you come into a cool room, you say, "Thank God I am here." You identify either with heat or cold. But if you can stand in the middle and be aware of both, then you are a Samkhya yogi.

Vedanta

Before describing Vedanta, we need to understand how vedantic concepts combine to become a realization and a lifestyle. Realization first comes as a sequential process, like moving from one class to another, from primary school to university, until a point where logic ends. Realization then continues beyond logic and occurs in the form of intuitive flashes. Archimedes, the greatest mathematical physicist of ancient times, realized the solution to a problem when he was taking a bath. In his elation he lost body consciousness and ran naked into the street, shouting “Eureka” (‘I’ve found it’). Sometimes realizations are so strong that they become real and overpower the logical self.

We cannot really define realization, just as we cannot define perfection, because the moment we define it, it is contained in an idea and is no longer realization. Therefore, in ancient India there was no concept of God. The concept that existed was *Brahman*, the supreme reality or supreme spirit, the great spirit. The nature of the great spirit is to evolve, to keep on expanding. Everyone has the freedom to decide how they wish to relate to the supreme spirit, what their connection will be and how it will develop. That freedom existed then and it exists today.

If you are asked to think of a rose, everyone will think of a different rose and create a different image. Even if you are asked to imagine a red rose, no one will create the same image. In the same way, the images you create when you think

of God can be different. When the population of India was thirty-three million, it was said there were thirty-three million gods and goddesses in India. Today, the population is over one billion and we say there are over one billion gods and goddesses in India, because at that level everybody is free to imagine a god according to their own individual projection.

When we think of the word hatred, we will each feel that negative emotion with a different intensity. One person will imagine their enemy and feel it strongly, while another person, who may not know what hatred is, will have to try and evoke that emotion. Each one will experience the same emotion in different intensities, which is their individual projection. Although there is one idea, there are multiple experiences. This is the foundation of vedantic philosophy.

Vedantic philosophy does not come to a conclusion; it does not say, “This is final.” At the end of the process of thinking that it could be this and it could be that, the final mantra is *Neti, Neti* – ‘Not this! Not this!’, not whatever has been spoken, or heard, or experienced. Something more always remains to be known. So, Vedanta, in its entirety, tries to develop a projection with which we can identify, a nature, an attitude, a vision, a concept, an understanding which allows us to experience our connection with Brahman.

Paths of jnana and bhakti

People have approached Vedanta from different angles too. There are two schools of thought: one emphasizes bhakti and the other emphasizes jnana. Jnana relates to the intellect, knowing; bhakti relates to the heart, feeling. One school focuses on feeling and going through the process of experiencing each step, and the other school says to filter out and choose. Both schools are valid for different temperaments. Some people need to follow the jnana path of Vedanta, to know, to discover, analyze and transform. Other people need to follow the bhakti path of Vedanta, to feel, identify and realize. These paths represent the different natures. Vedanta believes that, according to your predisposition, you can reach the highest straight from the heart or straight from the head.

The Vedas

The word Vedanta comes from *Veda*, meaning ‘knowledge’, and *anta*, meaning ‘end of’, so *Vedanta* means the end of perceivable knowledge, the culmination of knowledge, where the mind experiences its own limits and goes beyond them, gaining realization and understanding through that experience. Vedanta teaches the ultimate aim and scope of the Vedas, which are the oldest known form of literature in the world. The Vedas are generally recognized as the authentic scriptures of ancient India, composed before 5,000 BC, revealed to sages and seers and expressing knowledge of the entire universe. However, the Vedas are not just the literature of a land or a civilization, but a collection of understandings that evolved by living a particular way of life. All the understandings that the seers had on a variety of subjects: material, social, enquiries into the nature of the mind and enquiries into spiritual experiences, are collected in a body of literature known as the Vedas. The Vedas represent, not written scriptures, but an understanding of the laws of living righteously and appropriately. In vedic times there was a strong belief in social order which is shown by the social discipline that existed in the culture.

Four stages of life

In vedic times life was divided into four stages or *ashramas*, which everyone, as part of humanity, was expected to progress through. An ashrama is a place where one makes an effort to perfect oneself, to educate and understand oneself. Just as you don’t go to a club to be educated, but to school, college and university where the appropriate environment and discipline exist, similarly, an ashrama creates an environment of spiritual discipline and learning.

The first ashrama was *brahmacharya*, studentship, the period of learning the material, psychological and spiritual sciences. Until the age of twenty-five, life was devoted to studying and acquiring skills to survive in society, to maintain, administer and guide society. Just as today’s education system has a range of subjects in science, arts, commerce and other

disciplines, during the period of the Vedas sixty-four subjects were taught in the ashram. These subjects covered everything from spiritual to social to commercial, so that on completion of the training, one had the skills and ability to survive on one's own as well as a personal discipline which allowed one to grow spiritually. This was the purpose of brahmacharya ashram, not celibacy but education, where you moulded yourself and allowed your destiny to take shape.

The second stage of life according to the ancient vedic tradition was *grihastha ashrama*, household or married life from twenty-five to fifty years of age. After receiving an education, one had to take up social responsibilities, to participate fully in society, to contribute to the development of the family and society with the skills and abilities gained in the previous ashrama.

The third stage of life was *vanaprastha ashrama*, post-retirement, traditionally from fifty to seventy-five years of age. When family commitments and professional obligations came to an end, one retired to the forest, spending time in sadhana, prayer and study of the scriptures. One retired from worldly life and went to live in relative seclusion, allowing the next generation to take charge. Rather than being an active participant in society, now one became the thinker, gathering together the ideas and experiences gained over the years and furthering one's understanding of creation, existence, dharma and karma. This was the time when all these experiences were compiled as the Vedas. Vanaprastha ashrama was a life of reflection and collecting all the thoughts, ideas and views, as guidelines for future generations.

Beyond vanaprastha was *sannyasa ashrama*, total renunciation, traditionally the fourth stage of life for everyone from seventy-five years onwards. Having educated yourself and contributed to the stability and growth of society, yourself and your family and environment, you moved into sannyasa. In sannyasa you strive for perfection. The word *sannyasa* means putting your total self in trust. Just as you create a trust to ensure that your wealth will be used

in the right manner, in the same way you commit your abilities and skills to a spiritual trust, a divine trust – ‘Let me be the instrument of thy will’. From now on, you are not the controller. Sannyasa is letting go of what you were, surrendering yourself to the divine will and striving for perfection, not by rejecting or avoiding situations or actions, but by learning how to manage them.

Sannyasa is not escapism, getting away from family and friends into the mountains, without any problems or worries, only Hari, only God. That is the period for sadhana. After completing the sadhana, you have to live sannyasa. Sannyasa was not a sadhana, but a commitment, a lifestyle different from the one you had lived for seventy-five years. Sannyasa ashrama lasted from the age of seventy-five to one hundred years. One hundred represented the optimum age of that time, when the environment, the body, mind and heart were pure, so people lived longer.

The basic idea was that life is divided into quarters in order to fulfil different roles and dharmas, to acquire different understandings and karmas, and to refine them, so that one could live in the world not as a worldly person but as a righteous person. The word ‘righteous’ represents the state where everything is happening in the right manner. So this was the framework of the society which developed the idea of a unifying force, identified as Brahman.

Everything became Brahman, this became that, that became that, because we are all part of the same. The cells of the body have different roles to perform, yet they are contained within this body. Any experience a person had was seen as a pearl of wisdom to be added to the vast knowledge of the Vedas. So, the Vedas do not have one single author; thousands of sadhakas and thinkers contributed their experiences to this collection.

Three schools of thought

In the Vedas we find three schools of thought: i) *Advaita vada*, monism, the theory that Brahman is the only existence, that all reality is a single spiritual being; ii) *Dvaita vada*, the doctrine of

dual identity, or dualism, the idea that God and the world exist separately from one's self; and iii) *Traitā*, the triad, multiplicity, that one supreme reality manifesting as three.

The first view, *Adwaita vada*, said that everything is contained in one. Just as all the cells and organs of the body are contained in the shell of the skin and become a unit recognized as a body, similarly, everything is contained in one identity. Those who believed in one single identity were called *Adwaitans*. From the perspective of *Adwaita*, one is only a cell in the vast body of God.

In the dualistic approach, *Dwaita vada*, Brahman is the supreme consciousness and is constant, but there is something in Him, the power of transformation, which was recognized as *maya*, illusion.

What is *maya*? There is a beautiful passage in a poem by Robert Frost:

*From force to matter and back to force,
From form to content and back to form,
From norm to crazy and back to norm,
From bound to free and back to bound,
From sound to sense and back to sound,
So back and forth, back and forth,
It almost scares a man, the way things come in pairs.*

Maya is the movement from force to matter and back to force. It does not allow one singular identity to be developed, but always creates a distinction between force and matter, between form and content, between normal and crazy, between day and night, between yin and yang. You perceive the two as separate. So life is seen by dualistic eyes – me and you. That is known as *Dwaita*, where two exist, the great spirit and the creative power of the great spirit, which is also illusory because it does not have a fixed identity.

The nature of *maya*, the creative force, is like a chameleon. A chameleon is always changing colour, attracting us with its changing form, and we move towards that pleasurable object. A new model car or a new movie becomes the rage. These are the distractions of *maya*. It is mass hypnosis, a

group mentality, reflected in the behaviour and thinking pattern. Maya does not allow you to realize the real essence. You are carried by the force, and that force keeps changing. So Brahman and maya are the dualistic identities of Vedanta.

Then comes the triad, Traita, threefold awareness. If Brahman is the eternal principle and maya is the creative force, who is experiencing them? The individual soul or *jiva* is experiencing the interplay of maya and also aspiring to become one with the cosmic identity.

In Vedanta, these were the three systems of thought that came into existence: one which believed in the triad, threefold awareness, a multiplicity of things and returning to the source, one which believed in dualism, and one which believed in a singular existence.

Nature of Brahman

What is the nature of Brahman, the great spirit? What is the form of Brahman? How does one identify the great spirit? What are the constituents of that identity? *Satya*, truth, is the first identity. *Jnana*, knowledge, is the second identity. *Ananta*, eternal, infinite, is the third identity. *Ananda*, bliss, joy, contentment, is the fourth identity. *Amalam*, untainted purity, free from the impurity of maya, is the fifth identity. These are the five constituents of Brahman, the highest reality. The nature of Brahman is to evolve in developing its own identity. Truth becomes greater truth, bliss becomes greater bliss. Brahman continues to evolve. That is the *swaroop*, the natural form of Brahman, whereas the *swabhava* is the operational component, the relational nature. You are you, but when you come into contact with somebody or something else, how do you relate to that person, object, idea or thought? Your relationship is your *swabhava*, your relational nature.

Qualities of Brahman

The first component of this relational nature is *jnana*, omniscience. We tend to become the jack of all trades and master of none. We know how to change a light bulb, how to

repair a small stool, some simple carpentry and plumbing. We know many things in parts, the physical, material and also the internal, the spiritual, but the one who knows everything in totality is omniscient. So the first relational nature of Brahman is omniscience, knowing everything from the most basic understanding of how to create a speck of dust to creating a beautiful sun and moon, a beautiful universe, and a complex body which we take for granted. It is incredible. To create this existence is definitely the result of the omniscient quality. Nothing is left untouched, from the visible to the invisible, from the material to the non-material. That is the state of omniscience manifesting, one who knows all. Omniscience also becomes part of the creative force, of maya.

The second component is *bala*, strength, omnipotence, the potential that exists everywhere. Nothing in this creation or existence is without active and dormant potential. In the evolution of a seed, first it is planted in the ground, grows into a tree, gives flowers and fruits, ages and eventually withers, but in each season it has given each fruit the potential to again become a tree. The potential never ends. The evolution is from seed to growth, back to seed, from seed to growth, back to seed; it just goes on and on. This is the strength, the omnipotence, the potential that goes on continuously, without which nothing can exist. That is the omnipotence of the cosmic self.

The third component is *aishwarya*, meaning command, governorship, supremacy, sovereignty, the ruler, the controller. It is the consciousness which is inherent in every aspect of creation and under whose lordship we exist.

The fourth component is *shakti*, the creative power, which in its stable form is pure shakti, but in its active form becomes maya. Maya means the energy which has transmuted or changed itself and now becomes the cause of something. For example, if you harness the shakti or energy in water by creating a dam and begin to generate hydroelectric power, then the shakti inherent in the water has undergone a transformation to become hydroelectric power; it has become the cause of hydroelectric power. But while it has

become the cause, it has not lost its original shakti. The shakti is permanent. What has transmuted is maya, taking on a different form, fulfilling a different role.

The fifth component is *virya*, immutability, one which does not mutate. While consciousness can exist in everything, it does not take the form of the container; it does not mutate. When a person walks from point A to point B, you can infer that their mind also moved, because it is the mind guiding the movement of the inert body. But the spirit did not experience the movement as the mind did because it is immutable; it is contained in the form yet is not mutable. The mind and the senses are mutable, but not the spirit. Your mind associates with the senses and the body; your spirit is present in the structure, but it is not associating with either the mind or the body. It is simply present there. That is the immutable relational behaviour of Brahman in relation to objects like us.

The sixth component is *tejas*, splendour, self-luminosity, self-effulgence. There are no dark corners in God's personality or mind, every corner of God's nature is illuminated. That illumination is splendour of knowledge, bliss, energy, omnipotence. Nothing is absent; everything is contained.

The seventh component is *udarata*, generosity. Generosity is the relational behaviour of God. If God was not generous, we would have a very hard time. We are happy and comfortable only because of God's generosity. It is God's generosity that we all come endowed with the same abilities, strengths and qualities. The strength and the qualities that Swami Sivananda had, that Swami Satyananda has, that Rama or Krishna or Christ or Mohammed or Buddha had are all within us. That is generosity. They became aware of the wealth within them and we are still trying to dig and find out where our wealth is hidden.

Compassion

The eighth component is *karuna*, compassion. The word *prem*, love, is not used in the relational nature of Brahman. Compassion contains love, but this love is universal, not unidirectional. We think of love in a unidirectional way: I love

my wife, I love my friend, I love my children, I love my guru. Whatever we add to the word love always makes it focused or directional. However, when love is not connected or associated with anything or anyone, it becomes universal, and then it changes into compassion.

When Alexander the Great came to India and he was fighting in Western Punjab with the king of the region, every evening he would see an old man in a dhoti giving water to the injured Greek soldiers and treating their wounds with herbs. Alexander was impressed, and asked his name. The old man said, "My name is Theraban. I am a healer." Alexander said, "We are the enemy. You should be treating your soldiers and leave my soldiers to die." But Theraban said, "For me, everyone is a human being and a patient. I don't distinguish between one side and another." Alexander asked Theraban to take his knowledge of healing to Greece. In Greece, he was called Therapeus, and the word 'therapy' honours this man who saw no difference between an enemy and a friend, and treated them equally. That is love and compassion.

When love is unidirectional, we concentrate on our loved ones and ignore others. That is conditional love. In compassion, there will be equal vision, you will see everyone equally because you will consider them to be your own; you will feel their pain and you will reach out to them. Compassion is the ultimate love which does not differentiate but, like the sun, provides light to all. These are the relational behaviours of the supreme consciousness.

Practical Vedanta

Tat Twam Asi, ‘Thou art That, That thou art’, is our theme. We have looked at the technical components of Vedanta, and discussed Brahman, the Supreme Self, the Great Spirit, which, from the vedantic perspective, is identified and recognized as having certain attributes and qualities. How can we achieve the attributes of the Great Spirit, the Supreme Self? How can we attain that state of cosmic consciousness? Is it something that we can realize in this life? Swami Sivananda says it can happen by learning how to act and by cultivating *atmabhava*, identification with others.

In this body there is dependence, interdependence and connection. One dependence is temporary and another is permanent. Does the body depend on the spirit to survive? If the spirit leaves, the body ceases to exist and the spirit is dependent on the higher consciousness to exist, because it derives its nourishment from that state of being with which it identifies as its true self. Therefore, one of the vedantic principles is to recognize that you are an actor in this drama of the world.

Know how to act

An actor has a private life in which he does not have to play a role, but in professional life the actor becomes the part he is playing and identifies with it. Only then can real emotion be evoked. The more you experience the emotion you are evoking, the better an actor you become. However, once you

finish with the role, you don't carry the emotions, identity or personality into your private life. The moment you leave the stage, you are yourself again. This is one of the teachings of Vedanta. Don't identify, but simply act out your role. Don't identify, but be involved in the role, not passively, but dynamically. If there is a need to cry, cry; if there is a need to suffer, suffer; if there is a need to laugh, laugh, but remember that it is not the real you and the pain or suffering is not permanent. You act it out and it is finished.

In order to achieve that understanding and identification with the highest, to develop the vision of the highest, to live in tune and in harmony with the highest principle, learn to act and not be involved. This is one of the most important lessons of Vedanta. We all like to interfere in other people's lives, sometimes in the garb of a life-long connection, or as friendship, or as helping others. But the outcomes of these interactions are based on the predominant guna in us. If I associate with you with the idea of helping you and I have a tamasic nature, my understanding and help will have a tamasic quality. If I have a sattwic nature, my views will have a sattwic quality. So, one has to disassociate from the identity or understanding that 'I am a key role player'. Instead, simply become an actor following a script. These are the practical applications. First, learn how to act.

When Rama returned home from the gurukul and began to manage the affairs of state, he went into a state of depression. He said, "All this seems to go against the principles I learned in the gurukul. Why do I have to look after the kingdom? Why do I have to dispense justice? Why do I have to decide who is right and who is wrong? Punish the guilty and support the virtuous. Why can't there be equal vision?" His guru, Sage Vashishtha, explained, "You are thinking like this because you are identifying with the position. Simply act the role, don't identify with someone else's suffering. Recognize it and make every effort to eradicate it, sympathize with it, feel the pain, but at the same time be detached like an actor." This is the teaching given in *Yoga Vashishtha*, a treatise on Vedanta. Detachment is the first important prerequisite.

See yourself in others

The second prerequisite is atmabhava. Swami Sivananda used to say, “Cultivate atmabhava, see yourself in others. The more you see yourself in others, the purer you become.” Our ability to perceive ourselves in others is limited to those people or objects that we consider our own. We have a connection with our family and recognize them as our children, parents, wife, husband, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, etc. The closer the association, the greater the attachment; the more distant the association, the less attachment there will be. However, there is no attachment for a stranger because our world is limited to those with whom we identify.

Atmabhava means having the ability to see oneself in others. One has to cultivate that ability gradually. How did Swami Satyananda teach us to cultivate atmabhava? Swami Sivananda said, “Become that.” Paramahamsaji began his teaching by becoming the example of atmabhava, identifying not with his own needs, but with the needs of other people. His priority has always been the person who is in need. Our priority is ourselves; our needs come first and the needs of others come later. Whatever assistance Paramahamsaji receives, he uses it to help others. If he is given candles, chocolates or flowers, he will say, “No, that is not my need. Give me something that is useful for other people, such as grains, clothes, shoes, umbrellas, underwear, whatever you can. Give me what I can give to others.” That has been his attitude, and it is also the basis of Sivananda Math’s activities. Sivananda Math only gives. Every item given has a purpose; even the bag containing the gift is reusable.

This is an example of how by ‘becoming that’, Swami Satyananda is showing us the method of developing atmabhava. He says, “When you are able to perceive and fulfil the need of another person, you transcend your individual needy consciousness, your conditioned desire, affection and love. You connect with that universal compassionate consciousness, with that universal joy, and with that connection you purify yourself.” Therefore, in Swami Sivananda’s yoga, to attain realization of cosmic conscious-

ness, the first requisite is ‘serve’. Through service we begin to let go of our expectations of the results of our actions, our karmas.

Service is serving others. The word ‘serve’ always denotes doing something for another person. The other person becomes the centre of our attention and we become secondary. A doctor serves his patient, and in a crisis will stay by the patient’s bedside until the crisis is over, no matter how long it takes or what time of the day or night it is. At that time the doctor will not think about whether he is hungry or thirsty, because the patient will be his priority.

When you are in the spirit of service, the other person becomes the priority. By making the other person your focus and striving to help them overcome their need and suffering, you momentarily transcend self-centred body awareness and ‘I’ awareness. That momentary disconnection from yourself makes you feel happy and fulfilled. That happiness becomes even greater when the patient recovers and thanks you. This applies not just to the doctor-patient relationship, but to other relationships as well.

Open the heart

Swami Satyananda also says that as you cultivate this identity with other people, you soften your heart because you become their friend. The heart is always soft when it is associating with friends. That softness leads to opening of the heart, whereas rigidity of the heart closes the doors of the heart.

Swami Sivananda said that in order to disassociate from worldly identifications and connect with the transcendental reality, with the higher dimension of experience, first imagine that you are an actor on the stage of the world. If you don’t think in terms of acting and you are asked, “Who are you really?” What will you say? You will give your name and maybe your address, but that will not indicate who you are. If one probes deeper, you might say, “This is my nature, this is my character,” but still you will not be able to say who you are.

There is a story from Ramakrishna Paramahansa’s life. An aspirant said to him, “I hear that you commune with the

Mother all the time. Can you please ask her to visit me in my dreams?” Ramakrishna replied, “I will definitely ask the Mother to visit you in your dreams, but please give me your address so that she can go there.” The man wrote down his address. Ramakrishna looked at it and said, “Many other people live in that house. The Mother will be confused if she finds too many people at the same address. Give me your own address.” So the man wrote down his business address, and Ramakrishna said, “This is your office address, not your address.” Then Ramakrishna told the man that the moment he discovered his real address, he would find the Mother waiting there to receive him with open arms. That is opening of the heart.

Universal vision

Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda have always tried to bring inspiration into our lives. These two great people followed the path of Vedanta and yoga. The teachings of Swami Sivananda are not theoretical Vedanta, but practical Vedanta, all the little things that one can do to develop a universal vision. Swami Satyananda has said many times that if you want to get rid of your attachment, attach yourself to more people until a time comes when you will be connected with everybody.

How can we become attached to everyone? Paramahamsaji has said, “When you go to the market to buy clothes for your family of two, don’t just buy for two. Buy for three, and give the extra pair to a total stranger in need. Don’t buy shoes for two, buy for three. In this way, include another person in your life every year. By doing this, you will be able to alleviate need from their life over a period of time, and they will be able to stand on their own two feet with your encouragement, support and inspiration. You will have succeeded as a human being in cultivating another life, without any association or expectation, but as your contribution to the betterment of humanity.” This has been the teaching that Paramahamsaji has given to us through Sivananda Math. These are the teachings of real Vedanta, knowing how to act and developing atmabhava.

Living Yoga and Vedanta

The systems of Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta exist in order to uplift our lives. Upliftment is the nature of existence. If you light a fire, the flames reach upwards. If you plant a seed, the tree grows upwards. When you take birth, the body grows upwards. This upward growth is the indication of continuous evolution, or the desire to strive and achieve the perfection which can really make one into a human being. We identify ourselves as humans, but in reality we are not the masters or guides of our actions and destinies. We wish we were, but we are not. When we become that, then we become true human beings. Until then we are subject to the external influences that make, shape and break our nature, personality, ideas, feelings – everything.

The concept of becoming a true human being is a combination of living a yogic and vedantic life as envisioned by Swami Sivananda. He inspired the coming together of Vedanta and Yoga, not for an intellectual understanding of what lies beyond and what we are, but to be able to experience and live that. Sri Aurobindo also developed that concept. When he spoke of the transition from man to superman, it indicates a process of sublimation and transcendence.

The union of Yoga and Vedanta was inspired by Swami Sivananda and further developed by Swami Satyananda as yoga for head, heart and hands. Swami Satyananda gave it a specific direction and taught us to use the yogic practices to unfold our inner potential and to keep that focus in our

sadhana. Working with our heart, our head and our hands becomes the focus; developing skills, abilities and creativity and attaining gradual perfection in different situations and expressions. So what we have today is yoga for our body, yoga for our mind, yoga for our emotions and yoga to learn to internalize and awaken spiritual awareness.

The *Bhagavad Gita* helps us to understand how the personality develops through this identification with its associations over a period of time. Through Samkhya we learn to understand which nature we are dealing with, whether tamas, rajas or sattwa. We learn to recognize the conditionings which prevail, and how to develop the conviction and strength to move from one to the other to transform a particular behaviour, thought, attitude or response. Through Vedanta we develop an attitude which is free from every conditioning, where we connect with our inner purity.

So transcendence can be considered as purity, realization can be considered as purity, and righteous living can be considered as purity in thought, speech and action. You become that pure being, and in that purity there is enlightenment, there is freedom. It denotes the true human nature, the potential, what you can become. This is the journey into the world of the Sivananda tradition and the Satyananda tradition.

Disconnect and become free

We need to learn to work with these ideas and principles so that we can experience a different self. Remember that it is only a process of maturity, and maturity comes with wisdom. In *Pancha Tantra*, Indian children's stories with a moral, there is a story about three friends, two fish and a frog, who lived in a small pond. One fish was called Ekamati, single-minded, the other was called Bohumati, many-minded, and the frog was known as Jnana. One day, while the frog was sunning itself on a rock beside the pond, some fishermen came along and said they were going to fish in the pond tomorrow. The frog immediately jumped in the water and went to warn Ekamati and Bohumati of the danger, saying, "You should leave for

the next pond.” Single-minded said, “It is a danger and we should make every attempt to survive it, so let us think about it and come to the right solution.” Many-minded said, “Well, we know so many ways to avoid getting caught, we can always manage to escape, so there is no need to leave.” Jnana, the frog, said, “I am leaving,” and hopped onto dry land and disappeared.

The next day, the fishermen came and of course all the fish were caught in their net. Now Bohumati did every kind of pirouette and movement to escape, attracting the attention of the fishermen who grabbed him first and threw him on dry land. That was the fate of Bohumati, the many-minded fish. Ekamati, the single-minded fish, played dead. When the fisherman picked him up, he already seemed dead, so they threw him back in the water.

This story conveys a vedantic truth. If you can play dead to the world, you can survive, but if you think that you are bright and clever enough to deal with everything, you will have to go through the grindmill, and ultimately you will fail. Suffering, depression, frustration, the birth of a desire, the ego becoming bigger and bigger, all represent failure in life. If the ego gets bigger for any reason, if you feel proud, if there is a sense of arrogance, know that you are a failure. So learn how to disconnect in order to become free and to live. The single-minded fish, after reflection, came to this conclusion – that it is better to die, to disconnect in order to live, rather than live to live.

That is vedantic thinking, yogic thinking, because it denotes a spiritual awareness which allows us to go through life with happiness and joy. This is the vision inspired by Swami Sivananda, and it is this vision that we are trying to connect with today in order to experience the fact that every unfoldment in life is beautiful. Therefore, connect with the beauty that life has to offer you, not with the agony that you create for yourself. Let auspiciousness prevail.

Integrating Head, Heart and Hands

Sydney Yoga Expo, April 2, 2005

The story of Satyananda Yoga begins with Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who experimented with yoga in the 1940s in order to discover the effects of the practices on the human body, mind and emotions. Swami Sivananda inspired his disciples to propagate yoga all over the world. Today yoga has definitely become a universal word and many people have come across the yogic principles and practices in one form or another. However, the understanding of yoga in the West today is as it was in India about forty years ago. Yoga is seen as either a spiritual subject or as a group of physical practices. In the West, people have adopted yoga more for bodywork than personality work. Herein lies the difference between general yoga practice and the yoga propagated by Swami Sivananda and subsequently by Swami Satyananda. Body yoga is only a means to come into contact with our inner self. The inner self has to be nurtured and the inner qualities have to be developed, which will ultimately lead to the realization of yoga.

Yoga literally means 'union'. This has been interpreted in various ways. Those with a religious bent have said that yoga is union with God; those with a spiritual bent have said that yoga is freedom from suffering, a way to experience inner freedom. If yoga means union, what are the components of the human personality that have to be united? The three components are the qualities of head, heart and hands, the ability to think, the ability to feel and the ability to perform.

Balancing the gunas

According to yogic principles, the qualities of head, heart and hands are not balanced at present. There is a very simple reason. Each personality, each nature, each person is governed by three attributes: *sattwa*, the quality of purity and luminosity, *rajas*, the quality of activity, dynamism and aggressiveness, and *tamas*, lethargy and dullness. These three qualities condition the expressions of the head, heart and hands.

When we are down in the dumps, unable to think properly and closed in our feelings and sentiments, this restricts our creativity, and we are in a state of *tamas*. But when we begin to experience joy, creativity, openness, nourishment of the emotions and clarity of thought, then we are in a state of *sattwa*. *Sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas* create different conditionings, habits or behaviour patterns in our personality. When we are under stress, exhausted and wanting to rest, for example, we are in a state of *tamas*. That stress and tiredness is not only physical, but also mental, emotional and expressive or creative.

Swami Sivananda always said that the practices of yoga should be used to balance the qualities of *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Work to manage the head: the intellect, mind and thoughts. Work to manage the heart: the feelings, emotions, sentiments, compassion, understanding and love. Develop the qualities of the hands: performance and action. Swami Sivananda believed that society needed to be exposed to this system of yoga.

In the classical literature, Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* speaks of a specific state of being that one has to attain during the practice of yoga. In the *Yoga Sutras*, *asana* is defined as those postures in which one can experience comfort and stillness. If you practise physical postures, you have to connect with the source of stillness and comfort in your body. The moment you think of stillness, there is the feeling, the sensation, of being one-pointed, not distracted or dissipated. It is this coming together and flowering of the body, mind and emotions that is represented in the process of yoga.

Transformative yoga

What techniques can be applied to develop this relationship between the body, mind and emotions? The actual process of yoga begins when you come to the level of meditation. Prior to that, it is preparatory yoga; the asanas, pranayamas, etc., that you practise regularly are a preparation. Transformative yoga begins when you come to pratyahara, the fifth step of raja yoga, where you learn how to witness, observe and manage your mind and emotions.

There is a beautiful practice in the pratyahara series called the SWAN principle. S stands for strength, W for weakness, A for ambition and N for need. Identify your strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. Most of the time we are unaware of our strengths. There is a feeling of inadequacy in which our weaknesses simply overpower our behaviour, expressions, thinking and ideas, and we lose touch with the strengths we have within us.

So firstly we identify the strengths and weaknesses in our personality, and secondly we discover what our ambitions and needs are. Often we confuse need with ambition and ambition with need, but the distinction between them has to be clear. In yoga, this is the beginning of the meditative process, not closing our eyes and thinking of something abstract like God whom we have never seen, but trying to discover how our nature works, how we function, how the mind behaves, how the negative things in life overpower and dominate the creative and positive dimensions, and how we can again connect with the creative and positive dimension by transcending or changing the negative conditioning into a strength.

Connect with the positive self

Yoga seeks the enhancement of human personality, which will only happen if we are able to connect with the positive self and not identify with the confused self that seeks to auto-destruct. We are in self-destruct mode because our conditionings and habits have become so deeply embedded that it is almost impossible to extract ourselves from them. Rather than trying to change the habits and conditioning, try

to connect with the positive nature within to balance out the negative. This is the beginning of pratyahara, where we are able to work through our head, and discover how to manage our thoughts and behaviour, how to be more relaxed and free from the stresses of life. This meditative process takes us to a point where we disconnect from our mind and connect with our feelings. That happens in bhakti yoga.

Bhakti yoga is not the yoga of devotion. Bhakti is a particular state in which the emotions are being diverted or channelled inwards and not to the outside world. When our feelings are going outwards, they evoke a different response. If we interact with someone we see as our friend, the feeling will be friendship. If we relate to our children, the feeling will be affection. If we relate to our elders and superiors, the feeling will be respect. If we interact with our equals, the feeling will be love. Whoever we associate with generates a corresponding feeling. Each external object evokes a different response. When the same feeling is channelled and directed inwards to discover ourselves, it is bhakti. The diverted feeling is bhakti. This pure feeling can happen when we have been able to modify some of the basic conditionings of life, which are identified as self-centredness or selfishness. This change of attitude brings about purity of feeling and emotion.

Sivananda yoga – attitudinal change

Swami Sivananda used to say that in reality yoga begins where Patanjali leaves off. This means that you go through the eight stages of ashtanga yoga, and after you have attained the final stage, you become a graduate. Right now, you are going through the different classes of asana and pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana, yama and niyama, ultimately to samadhi. The moment you attain samadhi, you become a graduate and leave the university. Then yoga does not remain a practice any more; it becomes a part of your life. You begin to live yoga.

When you live yoga, you experience certain changes within yourself. The ability to recognize the needs of others and the motivation to help them deal with their needs is the

first attitudinal change that takes place. Swami Sivananda has described this as *sewa*, service. You naturally reach out to more people, you sympathize with more people, you understand the needs of people in a better way and you are in a better position to help them deal with their needs.

This change leads to further purification of the heart and emotions, giving birth to the quality of love. Until now you have never experienced love. When you are in love, you say, “I fell in love,” and when you fall in love, you don’t rise in love. It is conditioned love, not universal love. The ability to serve develops the ability to love universally. Just as the sun shines for everyone in equal intensity, similarly, the love that radiates from one’s personality is equal for all, not a little bit more for the family and a little bit less for strangers. The quality of unconditional love can be seen in the lives of enlightened beings. That love is the strength of their character and personality.

Then the third change in attitude happens: you start loving people and give of yourself. You give, and the more you give, the freer and purer you become inside. So you purify yourself. Swami Sivananda has described these changes as the milestones in the life of a yoga practitioner who experiences these attitudes upon perfecting yoga. These attitudes reflect a harmonious and balanced personality. They are not simple or imaginary attainments that you go through during meditation. It is not like a hit of bliss and you are on top of the world but again your ordinary self when the bliss subsides. That is not the purpose of yoga. The purpose of yoga is to elevate human consciousness. Elevation of human consciousness is discovered in the creative expression of human qualities.

Fine-tuning the personality

We have to aspire for the creative expression of human qualities, rather than samadhi or happiness and bliss. A blind man may want to see the sun, but his real need is for eyesight, because then he can see not only the sun but the whole of creation. Once the need is fulfilled, everything one

desires in life will be attainable. We have to realize this in the yogic system too. We do not have to aspire for freedom, *moksha*, and realization; we do not even have to bother about them. We just have to fine-tune our own personality and nature. Once you remove all the weeds from your garden and plant flower seeds and fruit trees, you will have a wonderful garden, but if you allow the weeds to grow, they will smother everything else.

You have to look after yourself in the same manner and not allow the weeds to cover the beautiful flower seeds that you have planted with your aspirations and inspirations. That is also the focus of meditation. In the beginning, the focus is to discover the strengths and weaknesses, ambitions and needs. Now the focus of meditation is to ensure that there are no weeds growing in your mind.

There is a story about a farmer who bought a piece of barren land and worked very hard to turn it into a beautiful garden. After many years of hard work, he was successful. The garden became famous and people came from everywhere to see it. One day a priest visited and said, "God's creation is wonderful. Look at the beautiful garden God has made!" The farmer replied, "You should have seen this piece of land when God had it! The beautiful garden you see is my work!" You can also be in the position where you can say, "I have made the garden of my life beautiful." God has given us all the basic tools, but it is up to us to ensure that we do not allow the weeds of negativity, discontent, ill will and lack of willpower to overshadow the strengths that we all hold within us.

So, integration of head, heart and hands has been the basic thrust of the Satyananda Yoga system, as inspired by Swami Sivananda. All the other yogas are an aid to attain the realization that we lack nothing in life. Everybody has come endowed with the same qualities as Jesus, as Krishna, as the prophets, saints and sages, as enlightened beings who have lived balanced lives. We also have the same qualities and the same strengths. We only need to recognize and develop them properly. Yoga provides us with an opportunity to achieve this goal.

Colombia

2005

International Yoga Convention

Bogota, 20–22 May

Santillana Foundation

Bogota, 19 May

National University

Bogota, 19 May

Jorge Tadeo University

Bogota, 19 May

Cartagena de Indias Convention Centre

27 May



Towards a Multi-Dimensional Mind

Colombia is a country very close to our hearts. Our guru, Swami Satyananda, first came to Colombia in 1970. In the course of time the ashram was established and some of us came to serve the mission and the centre. We also had the opportunity to investigate the ancient pre-Columbian culture and its spiritual traditions. We found ample evidence of yoga in the archaeological park near San Agustin, where there are five thousand-year-old stone statues, some of which depict many of the traditional yoga postures we practise today, such as vajrasana, padmasana, sirshasana, vrischikasana, as well as other aspects of hatha yoga not commonly known in the West, such as agnisara kriya and nauli. Concentration and meditation practices are also depicted. This has led us to believe that yoga was once a worldwide, universal culture.

Today we have taller buildings and wider highways, but we also have shorter temperaments and narrower points of view. We have been able to investigate outer space, but not the inner space. We have more knowledge, but less wisdom. We have more medicines, but poorer health. We have improved our efficiency, but have less time. We have increased our incomes, but lowered our moral values. We have finer houses, but many broken homes.

We live in a society which aspires for progress, and here there seems to be a contradiction between the normal lifestyle of society and our own aspirations. We aspire for something, but we are unable to change our present environment. The

main theme of this yoga convention is the discovery of our inner nature, because then it does not matter whether we have lower buildings or narrower roads, as our point of view and abilities are bigger and better. We may have less money, but we will enjoy greater health. We have to be able to discover a process which will help us come into contact with our inner self. The ancient civilizations of the world, which modern civilization calls pagan and backward, had the knowledge and wisdom to realize the inner self. This understanding can be seen depicted at San Agustin. The yoga I am introducing in Colombia is the yoga that was practised in this culture before it was lost to human civilization.

At San Agustin we also found many stone carvings depicting the symbols, philosophies and concepts of yoga in relation to energy and consciousness, in relation to vitality, the primordial force and creativity, and in relation to the psychic centres that exist in our body. There are two memorable statues, both of which have an inverted triangle at the base. In one, the figure of a snake ascends from the inverted triangle to the crown of the head and the serpent's head is on top of the human head. The other image is of a triangle with three lines moving from the base of the spine to the top of the spine, where they merge at the eyebrow centre. This is the concept of kundalini, the spiritual and mystical component of yoga.

In this manner, the entire philosophy of yoga and spiritual life can be seen in the symbols carved in the statues. From this we can infer that the people of this ancient civilization also had the aspiration to discover their connection with the universe and the cosmos. Although we may not understand their methods and philosophies today, they definitely had a way of life, a science and a practice which was very much a part of their culture and civilization. Later this became known as yoga.

When Swami Satyananda came to Colombia in the early 1970s, yoga was seen here more as a spiritual culture, whereas in Europe and Australia people practised yoga to trim their waistlines and to improve the beauty of their body. In Colombia people practised yoga not for the body, but for

mental and spiritual development. Paramahamsaji said that in Colombia people understood yoga as a subject of life, not as a physical practice. For this reason we have seen a vibrant tradition of yoga in Colombia. We find the same spirit in the people of this country and on this continent, reflecting the quest for knowledge and for self-understanding.

Teachings of Swami Sivananda

Swami Sivananda used to tell people, “Always strive to expand your horizons of knowledge. Always try to understand your own needs and the needs of other people and always try to extend a helping hand to everyone who needs it.” In Swami Sivananda’s teachings, acquisition of knowledge is the first thing that human beings can do to improve the quality of life. This knowledge is internal, not external, knowing the various dimensions of the personality and mind in order to improve them, so that creativity, peace and contentment become natural expressions and experiences. As a medical doctor, Swami Sivananda understood science, human anatomy and physiology, and the mind. He made an effort to remove the trappings of mysticism from yoga and to teach yoga in a very practical and systematic form so that people could discover themselves.

However, yoga is much more ancient than the teachings of Swami Sivananda that we became exposed to in the last century. The purpose of yoga is to provide a method for the individual to experience physical health, mental awareness and tranquillity, and spiritual upliftment. These are the three main aims of yogic practices. The physical practices are *asana* and *pranayama*, postures and breathing techniques. The mental practices are *pratyahara*, techniques of relaxation and developing awareness, and *dharana*, techniques for developing concentration. The spiritual dimensions of yoga can be experienced when meditation is practised. This is how the system of yoga originally developed. Later, many people added various practices, concepts and theories to this body of yoga according to their discoveries and understanding of human nature, human behaviour and human possibilities.

We all come endowed with qualities and abilities that can make us better or, if misused, make us worse. Everybody has untapped potential, a creative dimension which is not yet awakened. In the absence of awakening the inner creativity of the personality, we experience conflict and confusion. However, yogis believed that although, from birth to death, we go through many different experiences related to the senses and mind, there is the possibility of modifying, improving and transforming the limited expressions of the senses, mind and emotions, and converting the thoughts and feelings into more expansive and peaceful expressions. This is the beginning of yoga.

Thousands of years later Swami Sivananda brought the practical aspects of yoga to the public. Prior to Swami Sivananda, many people spoke about yoga, but as theory, not practice. Swami Sivananda and his disciples made yoga available to the public as a practical and scientific subject. Swami Satyananda researched the ancient yogic theories and literature and developed many of the physical, mental and spiritual practices of today, including pawanmuktasana, pranayama, yoga nidra, pratyahara and dharana techniques, and kriya and kundalini yoga. Our tradition emphasizes the integration of body, mind and spirit. It takes the essence of yoga from the ancient past and develops the practices to enable a better and brighter future for humanity. Our tradition exemplifies the growth and application of yoga in the context of modern society.

Globally, however, we still find that yoga teachers and centres are caught up in the physical self, and call that yoga. But stretching the body is not yoga. Yoga is stability of the body, mind, emotions and feelings. A stable life is the requirement of human beings today. From the yogic perspective, a stable life means a balanced and harmonious life, one in which you are the master of your actions and mind and able to direct your energies to become happy and contented. This is practical yoga, not just physical yoga or spiritual yoga, and it can guide the practitioner from body to mind, to emotions and to spirit.

Connecting with spirit

To ensure that the quality of life is strong and healthy, we have to care for the roots of life, the spirit, which is luminous but hidden. We have an understanding of spirit, but we do not know where it is or how to experience it. The body is something tangible that we can touch, feel and experience, so we can identify with it. We experience the mind in the form of thoughts, feelings, desires, expectations and ambitions, and therefore we can accept the existence of the mind. Both Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda, the inspirers of our tradition, have said that yoga allows one to connect with one's spirit. Once that connection has taken place, the quality of the mind changes, the quality of life changes and the wellbeing of the body changes.

Therefore, from this perspective, yoga means union of the individual consciousness with the higher consciousness. In its pure form this higher consciousness is known as God. The word GOD represents the quality of generation and creation, the quality of organization and maintenance, and the quality of destruction and transformation. These are the strengths of the human spirit. When we experience these three qualities at our level and in our dimension, they belong to the individual self. We have the ability to create, we have the ability to maintain and manage, and we also have the ability to change, transform and destroy. The interactions of the individual spirit in the external world are what make an individual a human being. But experiencing these three qualities at the internal level, with greater awareness, clarity and wisdom, connects one with the all pervasive consciousness. This is the union yoga aspires for, union of the individual spirit with the cosmic spirit.

Philosophers and intellectuals have used this definition of yoga to create an image of mysticism in the body of yoga. But let me tell you very clearly that yoga is not mysticism. It was the belief of those who did not really understand mysticism and considered anything beyond the senses to be mystic. After all, when you are asleep, you are not aware of the body or the senses, but you dream. If the senses are inactive, if the

mind is disconnected from time, space and object, then who is dreaming? Yet you do not call that a mystical experience. How then can meditation, in which you are guiding yourself step-by-step on a path of self-discovery, be called a mystical experience? Mysticism is a trapping, a label given to certain yogic experiences which people have not yet been able to understand because they do not know the sequence or process.

When the camera was first introduced, there was a belief that the spirit was being captured in the camera. Today, no one thinks in this manner because an understanding or awareness has developed that the camera is not capturing the spirit in the film, but only the image of the body. Similarly, you have to go through a process of understanding of yoga and then you will discover that yoga is not mysticism. We cannot define mysticism; it is unknown to us, which is why we say it is something beyond the mind. However, yoga is not mysticism, but rather a simple and sequential process of knowing the body and how it responds to the situations, stresses and tensions of our normal day-to-day life. Yoga is a system of knowing the mind and how it is influenced by various situations, events and circumstances.

We are influenced by what other people say. If somebody abuses you, it hurts your self-esteem and sense of ego, and you are not able to let it go. When it relates to you, you become the centre of that experience of pain, suffering, joy or happiness, whatever its content. We are also unable to let go of our own headtrips and heartaches, inhibiting the creativity of the mind and consciousness. This is where the mental component of yoga comes in. Find your balance, peace or happiness by observing and understanding the influences of the situations and circumstances that affect you. Once inner mental peace is attained, then spiritual life, the spiritual component of yoga, begins.

Become a winner

In books on philosophy, yoga or spiritual subjects, various authors often say that to be a winner in spiritual life, an aspirant has to be like a warrior who fights and overcomes

negativity, shortcomings and weaknesses. However, this idea goes against the spiritual precepts and principles of yoga, which say: “Be a farmer, not a warrior.” It is no use gaining at the expense of death, destruction and suffering, but there is beauty in being a farmer because you plant seeds, care for them, ensure their security and growth, and later on enjoy the fruits. In yoga, spiritual life is becoming the farmer of our own lives. A farmer converts a barren piece of land into a beautiful garden through effort. That is the spiritual aspect of yoga.

You have to look at your life and make it into a garden. Sow the positive qualities, the inner strengths and convictions, willpower, understanding, wisdom, compassion and love, and the desire for service and purification, which define progression in spiritual life. Remember that life is not suffering or survival, but a sequence of moments of happiness, joy, peace and bliss. If you capture these moments, then you live a full life because you have created a sequence and continuity, but if you think of life as suffering, struggling and surviving, then you do not see the beauty. When you begin to plant positive seeds, they convert the quality of your life, and that makes you a yogi.

In Sanskrit, there are three words: yogi, bhogi and rogi. A *yogi* is a practitioner of yoga, a *bhogi* is the enjoyer and a *rogi* is one who is sick. In normal life we are on the middle path, searching for *bhoga*, enjoyment. As long as the enjoyment is balanced, you become a yogi, but if it is unbalanced, then you become a rogi. A bhogi is one who enjoys, lives and acts, one who is part of the whole world. We are all bhogis, enjoyers. As the drive for pleasure increases, we become more materialistic and move into a state of imbalance, which leads to ill health of the body, mind, emotions and spirit. But if we are able to regulate our enjoyment, if we are able to direct our efforts towards balance, then we become a yogi, one who experiences harmony in life.

In the entire system of yoga, the effort is not to make you enlightened or spiritual. Enlightenment or realization is an outcome of a balanced, harmonious personality, which is not in conflict with itself or with other people, situations

or conditions, but is equipoised. Enlightenment is not the ultimate goal of life. Mind management is the goal because the rest is just an outcome of the inner harmony one is able to experience through the yogic practices of meditation, awareness and contemplation. This is the aim of yoga, because at this point yoga does not only remain a practice, but becomes a lifestyle.

Living yoga

If yoga is only a practice, something you do in a classroom, you do not carry it with you outside, but if yoga is a lifestyle, it remains within you twenty-four hours of the day, wherever you are or whatever your circumstances may be. You live yoga. That is the culmination, the grand finale we wish to see. We do not wish to see somebody who can practise meditation for eight hours without moving their body, because that is useless. All you do is waste your time in mental imaginings and fantasies. By applying yourself, you will receive more returns than by simply closing your eyes. Therefore, it needs to be understood that yoga is not escaping from life, but running into life with open arms and an attitude of acceptance, and with the attitude of improving one's ability to perform, to think and to understand.

This is the basic foundation of yoga. We begin with the purpose of improving the wellbeing of the body, attaining peace of mind and experiencing spiritual awakening. These three aims have to be taken together in order for the roots of our life to be strong and able to withstand every kind of storm or tempest that comes our way.

Spiritual and mystical experiences are the outcome of a trained mind, a mind that has been disciplined and awakened by the input of different attitudes and qualities to uplift human consciousness. The general trend is to talk a lot, love a little and hate a lot. Let us talk less, love more and hate less. How long are we going to subject ourselves to the agonies which are self-created by our ego, ambitions and dislikes? We have to connect with the positive self some time. Yoga provides the instruments to connect with the positive, creative self.

This creative, positive self is nourished and nurtured by the qualities of love, compassion, purity and understanding. We need to cherish these qualities because they make us a real human being. This has been the teaching of all the spiritual traditions.

Yoga allows us to conquer our inner space. This is the teaching of our tradition and also the teaching we encounter in the ancient pre-Columbian culture. There are many countries in the world where yoga is practised, but only a few that have the potential to experience yoga and live yoga. India is one of these countries, Colombia is another, and possibly other South American countries too, because the yogic culture extends to the Andes and is not restricted to a geographical location. Just as energy moves in the spine, in the same way yoga has moved through the Andes to the South American countries. Here we find very pure and sincere seekers who, if given the right opportunity, training and teaching, can again live a yogic way of life and experience union with other beings and the cosmos. This union is an expression of love and compassion because union without love and compassion, empathy and oneness, purity and service, is not union. It is an attitude of mind, a selfless, positive and constructive attitude of mind.

In a nutshell, yoga is a process of sublimating the normal and natural behaviour to a point where it becomes universal. Yoga teaches us to come out of the personal shell. Before a seed can sprout, it has to die. Only when the shell of the seed is broken will the sprout be seen. In the same manner, yoga helps us to break the shell of selfishness and egocentricity in order to allow spiritual sprouting to take place where there is beauty, calmness and peace. This is what we look for in our life in today's society.

Managing Emotional Energy

Managing the emotions is the least known component of yoga in the West and in the East because generally people connect with their intellect or head, not with their emotions or heart. Emotional experience is analyzed at the level of the intellect and, therefore, it becomes difficult or practically impossible to understand the real nature of our emotions. As a result we are unable to manage emotional disturbance or imbalance. Emotion is the least understood form of human expression.

Let us begin our journey with the intellect and work our way to the emotions. Life is an interplay of consciousness and energy according to yoga, tantra and vedanta, the three systems of human transformation developed in India. In the absence of knowledge of their principles and techniques, tantra and vedanta are looked upon as philosophies only, but they are complementary to yoga. Whereas yoga provides an understanding of the process of self-transformation, tantra provides an understanding of the interplay of consciousness and energy in material life, and vedanta provides an understanding of how to develop a balanced, universal attitude. When these three systems come together, they become a powerful tool for self-transformation.

However, this is not intellectual self-transformation. When people take up spiritual life, they believe that the more they know, the more spiritual they will become. They read volume after volume just trying to understand something, but instead of understanding they go through a process of intellectual

gymnastics which sometimes leads to greater confusion. The *Ishavasya Upanishad* states, “Knowledge definitely leads to illumination, but at the same time it can lead to greater darkness if it is not converted into wisdom.” Today we have knowledge, but we don’t have wisdom. We have understanding, but we are still in the dark because we don’t know how to apply that understanding in our normal day-to-day affairs, behaviour and actions. Sri Aurobindo, one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, declared that in the beginning the intellect is always a friend, but at the end it becomes the barrier which one needs to transcend in order to establish oneself in spiritual life.

Intellect and experience

This process of using the intellectual abilities, the mental faculties such as thoughts and desires, the expressive nature of the mind, to come to a point of realization where knowledge is applied is known as jnana yoga. *Jnana yoga* literally means the ‘yoga of knowledge’. However, jnana yoga is not intellectual knowledge as many people believe, but experiential knowledge and understanding that has to be developed in the course of one’s life.

Many people think that jnana yoga is asking the question ‘Who am I and what is my relationship with the world?’ and trying to answer it. However, it is easy to think you are divine but very difficult to experience it in your life. That is where the practical, sequential process of yoga becomes important. Don’t be a bookworm. Follow the practice in which you discover yourself, not by asking yourself “Who am I?” but by seeing yourself as you are at present in reality. If you ask yourself, it is your mind that will answer you according to its interpretations of your experiences and according to the conditionings you have inherited from your culture and society. These interpretations and ideas will reflect the conditionings of the mind, not the real self.

One of our main problems is that we try to analyze things that cannot be analyzed, like trying to discover the taste of cyanide! When there is no experience, the mind creates an

idea about it. Intellect is an association of the mind with the world of senses, objects, name, form and idea. After all, creation is nothing but different objects, forms and names, which we recognize. Each object has a form and a name. Each form is represented by an object, each form has a name, each name has an object, each name has a form – this is creation. Creation is name, form and object.

In yoga the intellect, *buddhi*, interacts in the dimension of name, form and object. External objects, events or conditions play a major role in altering the perceptions of the intellect. Intelligence is a broader concept than intellect because intelligence can encompass the material, physical, transcendental, psychic or mystical. Intelligence has no boundaries whereas intellect has boundaries. Intelligence can also be experienced in the form of intuition, realization, knowing and recognizing.

Human beings identify totally with the intellect and reject experiences and ideas which do not fit into the structure of the intellect, which do not fit their concepts and understanding. The intellect undergoes a process of maturation while intelligence remains constant. A child's intellect develops and matures as it is trained and educated, progressing from one class to another, growing up with inputs from society, family, culture and traditions. The intellect is actually a conditioning of the mind, which can be uplifting or stagnant. We try to fit all our expressions, experiences, concepts and ideas into a limited area of our intellect. Therefore, we know a lot, but we are not able to live what we know. Although our aspirations are high, our efforts do not match the intensity of our aspirations.

For example, you are committed to being somewhere at a certain time to fulfil an obligation, but arrive an hour late. The intellect knows fully well that it will be unable to fulfil the responsibility, so why does your intellect behave in this manner, neglecting your duties? There is always the excuse that something prevented you from being on time. The intellect and knowledge are there, but not the participation and involvement in that intellectual commitment.

To manage the mind we go through the practices specified in raja yoga. We go through a process of seeing ourselves, experiencing our mind, realizing our thoughts, observing our desires, categorizing our expectations and deciding our priorities or expectations until we are able to manage and be in harmony with our intellect.

The nature of emotions

To manage the emotions, there is bhakti yoga. However, first we need to understand the nature of emotion. Energy in motion is emotion, e-motion. Emotion is the outcome of an interactive process between the intellect and an object. You see a flower, which is the object, and the image is captured by the mind. However, the association of the mind with an object will give birth to a feeling. You will appreciate the beauty, smell and form of the flower and the association will make you feel happy. You see an old friend whom you have not seen for many years. The person is an object and you are an object. Your association with that person will make you feel happy, full of love and affection and the desire to approach that person. If you see a person you classify as an enemy, you will experience anger, hatred or dissatisfaction.

Emotions are the results of associations between people, objects, ideas, situations and circumstances. These emotions cannot be managed easily because we do not understand our associations. Intellectually, we think of our associations with others in terms of family and friends; this person is my husband, my wife, my boyfriend, my girlfriend, my son, my daughter, my brother, my sister, my aunt, my uncle, my grandfather, my grandmother, etc. Each association will involve an emotional response. In a positive interaction, the emotion will be positive; there will be feelings of love, happiness, sympathy or compassion. If the emotion is negative, the mind will become negative, jealous, hateful, angry, frustrated or anxious, all as a result of an association with a person or situation. Therefore, emotions are nothing but energies in motion.

When you look at your boyfriend or girlfriend, you experience passion. When you look at your children, you

experience affection. When you look at your adversary, you experience competition and jealousy. When you look at a bag of money lying on the floor, you experience greed. Whatever you look at will awaken the corresponding emotion. Emotions are like clear crystal balls, which have no colour of their own. If a crystal ball is placed on a red cloth, it will reflect the colour red, on a black cloth it will reflect the colour black. It will reflect whatever colour it is placed on. That is also the nature of emotion.

Emotions are neither material nor spiritual; they are a force or energy. When that energy comes into contact with a situation, a person, an object or an idea, the colour of that particular interaction is seen in the crystal of the emotions, and you experience it. When emotions have been diverted to the world of the senses, they take us through a myriad of experiences, both good and bad; compassion, sympathy and love at one extreme and hatred, jealousy and greed at the other. This is a continuous process.

Bhakti yoga: internalizing the emotions

When you are able to redirect the externalized, outward flowing emotions inwards, that becomes bhakti. People think of bhakti as a devotional practice and process, but it is not so. From the yogic perspective, *bhakti* is management of these extreme emotions by internalizing and rechannelling them. This is the aim of bhakti yoga. Thinking about God is not the purpose of bhakti. It may be your inclination or desire, but managing the human emotions is the first consideration of bhakti yoga.

Bhakti yoga has nine stages or components. Raja yoga is known as the eightfold path of yoga, and bhakti yoga as the ninefold path. Bhakti is lived and practised in a meditative condition, because you have to manage your mind and allow the emotions to sublimate themselves. A separation has to take place between emotional associations and intellectual associations. Until this separation happens, one does not progress in the path of bhakti or emotional management.

There is definitely a contradiction between this approach and the approach in the West where emotions are seen as

weaknesses. Crying is seen as a sign of weakness. Parents tell their children, “Do not cry, be a man!” But without emotional expression there will be a vacuum, a lack of emotional development. This sense of emptiness leads to various crises, whether it is a family crisis, a moral crisis or a crisis in values, because modern society does not accept emotion as a strength of the personality but as a weakness. However, yoga sees emotion as a strength.

The nine stages of bhakti have not been taught in the West. People tend to think of bhakti as religion. The concept of emotional management does not exist in western culture, where emotion is an expression of desire. Love, for example, is considered to be an emotion that everybody has experienced. However, what people experience is not love but sensuality, an interplay of their expectations. Very few human beings ever experience love in their lives. Christ felt love, and that love was selfless, not conditioned to achieve his goals. Other masters have experienced and awakened this force and their love has been practical and uplifting, not blind. Our love is impractical and blind, to fulfil our need. Giving someone all your love is never an assurance that they will love you back. You have to allow love to grow in the other person’s heart, not demand it. If the other person never loves you, at least you should be happy that love was nurtured in you. You have to experience that transformation, not the other person. If you are expecting a return, where is the unconditional love? So be happy that love grew in you and identify with that.

First stage of bhakti: uplifting associations

The first component of bhakti is associating with an uplifting environment. This means that you now have to decide on your associations. You associate with those who can transform and uplift your life, who can make your heart sing with their optimism, positivity and clarity. Of course, it is very difficult to find somebody in the external world who can make one’s heart sing, so naturally one is diverted towards the Cosmic Self, God, because it is God’s energy which makes our hearts sing.

Some people associate this feeling and experience with God, others associate this relationship with guru. There are people who associate this feeling or relationship with someone who is knowledgeable, well versed in wisdom. Whatever the approach adopted externally, the main idea is that you make the choice. You choose the association. The connection has to take place with something that will always keep us connected to the transformative energy. That is the first step of bhakti yoga. It begins in meditation.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the spiritual scriptures of India, there is a beautiful statement about associations in the second chapter. When the mind associates with objects, it gives birth to desire. We all attempt to attain this desire. When we are unable to fulfil the desire, frustration is experienced internally. When frustration is experienced, the mind loses its clarity and becomes obsessed by what it has not achieved or gained. There is a more intense drive to fulfil that desire or ambition. When the drive becomes more forceful, along with frustration and personal, self-oriented expectations, a split in the mind is created, destroying mental peace. The ability to discriminate disappears and the materialistic, obsessive nature becomes predominant, eventually leading to the death of the human character and human peace.

We are not able to manage our associations because we are caught up in our own expectations and desires, too selfish and not selfless. It does not mean that everybody has to become selfless and ignore their own needs, but there has to be a balance between giving and taking. If you are fifty percent selfish, you have to be fifty percent selfless. It is as simple as that. A balance between selfishness and selflessness has to be achieved. If you renounce selfishness one hundred percent, then you become Swami Satyananda or Swami Sivananda, but if you are able to renounce fifty percent of your selfish nature and adopt fifty percent of your selfless nature, then you become a yogi. So in the first stage of bhakti yoga, we try to achieve a balance through meditation by re-analyzing and observing our associations and connections to allow the emotions to express themselves in the form of strength, not weakness.

Second stage of bhakti: positive thinking

The second component of bhakti yoga is always having positive and constructive thoughts. *Ahimsa* is absence of violence. Violence is normally considered to be external, but in yoga it is not so. Ahimsa is absence of violence from the personality, in thought, speech and action, identifying with positive, uplifting qualities, positive, balanced emotions, maintaining positive thoughts and basing those thoughts on righteousness and truth.

Do this exercise today. Just see what kind of negative thoughts you have during the day and how many. “I don’t like this” is a negative thought, or “All these people are too difficult” is a negative thought. Just analyze and observe the negative thoughts that you experience during the day in your mind. Can you make them positive? How will you make them positive? Make an attempt today, keeping in mind the ways of coming to this point of inner transformation, understanding and awareness that we have discussed.

Third stage of bhakti: becoming egoless

The third stage of bhakti yoga is freeing oneself from the ego. How? Every moment of the day we wear a different mask. We look at the world and ourselves through that mask. We have never seen our own faces in the internal mirror. The masks that we put on in relation to our self-image and self-projection take us away from the truthful nature. If we put on a mask, we can’t see our own face. We see the mask, which is how we wish to project ourselves and how we wish other people to see us. Putting on different masks is the effort we make every day.

Do we have the ability to get rid of this mask and be natural, to be ourselves? We identify too deeply with our ego, which is the identity of life. This is not bad at all, but what is bad is how we utilize the ego to project ourselves. Sometimes there is no consideration for anything but our own requirements. People climb the ladder of status in society and pull the legs of others who are trying to climb up with them, at the same time keeping a smile on their face, ‘killing with a smile’. We want to get on top at the expense of human

values. In yoga one has to free oneself from that mask, to be egoless, which means being free from negative, aggressive ego-identification, in order to know who you are, to know your true self.

If somebody says, “You are wonderful, you are such a nice person, so helpful,” suddenly you sit up straighter with more of a smile on your face because you have been given a compliment. That compliment has fed your ego. Abuse also feeds the ego. When somebody says you are bad, you feel you must be bad because that person says so. Different ego associations take place. The most important component of bhakti is to disassociate from the negative and aggressive ego connection and come to a balanced ego, a sattwic ego. In the beginning we don’t aspire to be egoless, but we try to acquire the sattwic ego. The sattwic ego is important to survive in the world and when we die, that sattwic ego is also dissolved.

Balancing head, heart and hands

The nine components of bhakti become the means of improving the quality of the emotions, energy in motion, to bring about a balance between the activities of the head and the heart, intellect and emotions. Swami Satyananda has said many times that yoga is nothing but harmonization of the functions and activities of the head, heart and hands. Balanced emotion leads to balanced intellect and performance. Emotions are strengths of the personality, not weaknesses. They are the strengths that connect one human being with another, the strengths that connect our civilization as a family, the strengths that connect a human being with God. Bhakti yoga is a most misunderstood yoga, but possibly also the most important yoga.

Yoga, Efficiency and Productivity

We have discussed the intellect and the emotions, our head and our heart. Efficiency and productivity relate to our hands, the ability to perform. The ability to perform has been perceived in different ways. Some people have said that life is nothing but an expression of continuous action, *karma*, action and reaction. This is true because it is not possible to free oneself from the karmas, from the influence and effects of action and reaction. In reality, it is impossible to be free from action because life is a process of action and birth is a process of action or karma. Birth is karma and living is karma.

In the normal sense of the word, karma denotes action and reaction, the process and the result. Bringing the two hands together is an action, but the outcome is the clapping sound. So action always denotes a process which gives birth to another result. From a spiritual perspective life is seen in this manner. Therefore, it is said that it is impossible to free oneself from the karmas.

However, karma is both physical and also a conditioning of consciousness. Physically, the body becomes the vehicle to perform the karma. If you are hungry, you use your body to perform the karma to satisfy your hunger. In the Upanishads there is a story that when man was first created, he felt hungry, so he looked for food. He tried to satisfy his hunger by looking, but could not do so. Then he tried smelling to satisfy his hunger, but smelling did not satisfy him. He went through the whole process until he discovered how to use his hands

to eat, thereby satisfying his hunger. That is physical karma; we have to satisfy whatever our body needs or experiences.

Sometimes the physical karmas can be very intense and bothersome. If you have diarrhoea and you are on a bus on a bumpy road, you just have to control the karma of the body until you can get off the bus and release the karma. Similarly, when you are hungry, you have to eat, that is the karma of the body. When we associate or interact with other people, we are expressing karma. My talking is a karma or action, as is your listening. Life is nothing but an expression of karma.

Yoga in industry

In society, our karma, our ability to perform, is related to our needs, family and profession. In the early 1990s, Bihar School of Yoga was involved in teaching yoga to the management and workers of a large company, at the request of the managing director who had decided that yoga would improve worker efficiency and increase company productivity. For two years we assisted the human resources department. In the mornings our teachers taught yoga to the administrators, executives and directors, and in the afternoon and evening, to the workers and supervisors. During that time there were no strikes or disputes. Administrators and workers sat at the same table to negotiate and find solutions to problems without any conflict.

What did we teach? We taught basic asanas and pranayamas and basic relaxation and concentration techniques, and ensured there was daily practice. The results? Firstly, there was an overall improvement in the physical and personal wellbeing of employees. Secondly, there was a big reduction in expenditure on medical care and sick leave. In one year, productivity improved by thirty-seven percent, just through human effort and the connection with yoga, which is a great achievement.

Today people do not know how to relax. If you were to collect all the medicines in the world, you would find that more than sixty percent are tranquillizers and fewer than forty percent are used to treat diseases and illnesses. So, you

can imagine the general state of mental health. We have lost the ability to relax and to sleep without medication. Is that human wisdom and creativity or is it human weakness? It is a great weakness because we have lost the ability to let go. Whatever is accumulated in the mind simply creates psychological tension, building unconscious tension that we cannot release, which affects our personality, body and behaviour.

By practising yoga nidra, both workers and management learned how to leave the tensions of the office behind when they went home and the problems of home behind when they came to the office. If you can develop the ability to keep your personal and professional life separate, you will also discover the beauty of action and performance, because you will not be restricted by your inner dramas, tensions, insecurities and phobias.

We also taught the employees how to avoid thinking about family or professional problems when they went to bed at night, but to focus on relaxing and letting go of stress and tension to improve the quality of sleep. We also taught meditation so they could observe and understand their own responses to situations, to other people, to the administrators and to the needs of the industry, to recognize their responsibility for productivity. The role of the workers is as important as that of the managing director, as both are on an equal footing when it comes to increasing company productivity. Meditation helped them to understand this simple principle because it took them away from their own egotistical whims and aggression, so they were able to observe and analyze their own needs in relation to the greater need and their responsibility to the industry.

This example shows that the yoga practices of *asanas*, physical postures, *pranayamas*, breathing techniques, relaxation and concentration improve the wellbeing of the body and mind and make one more aware of one's commitments and duties. By identifying with your responsibilities, you overcome the shortcomings which restrict your total participation. In this way, yoga helped the members of the company to become more efficient in their lives.

Karma yoga

We were talking of karma as action and reaction. Karma does not stand alone; it involves the intellect and emotions. For this reason, we often become too involved in what we are doing and fail to see and utilize other opportunities that arise. When one door to happiness closes, another door opens naturally, but we are so caught up in looking at the closed door and feeling sad that we ignore the door which has opened. We are not even aware that the other door has opened because we continue to watch the closed door. We seek advice and guidance, but we are so involved in trying to correct others that we miss opportunities. Missing opportunities is known as bad karma. Finding the door is good karma.

We have to practise karma yoga. Karma, action and reaction, represents our involvement in the world of senses and objects. As long as we are involved in this world, we have certain expectations and seek fulfilment with the help of the karmas. These expectations are so highlighted in our lives that karma becomes secondary and expectations become primary. Our efforts become not to improve the quality of our performance, but to expect better results while ignoring the quality of performance.

If you are a businessperson or a professional person, your heart is not in your work. You work because you know you will get paid at the end of the month. The action becomes mechanical because you are focusing not on the action, but on the result. When you ignore the action, it becomes difficult and the expectations may or may not be fulfilled. Therefore, suffering, depression, anxiety and frustration also become part of karma because the focus is not on improving the quality of performance and participation in action, but on increased expectation.

When we attach the word yoga to the word karma, it takes on a different meaning altogether, and becomes harmony in action, awareness, relaxation, wisdom, understanding, creativity or perfection in action, which represent the ideals of karma yoga. Karma yoga has been defined as selfless

action, but this is not totally correct. A selfless attitude, a selfless nature or personality is not something you can attain simply by thinking, “I am going to be selfless from now on,” by thinking that from today you are going to change.

Change is very difficult; attempting to change oneself is a struggle. It is like trying to adjust the time you get up in the morning. You have to stop fighting and very gradually re-educate the previous conditionings. Every week get up a few minutes earlier so that the mind is re-educated. Only when you are able to retrain yourself by gradually managing and changing the normal behavioural patterns can you experience yoga in normal day-to-day affairs. The karma is normal; you continue doing the same thing you have been doing for the last thirty or forty years. However, when you add the word yoga to karma, you become more aware and able to manage situations in a better way.

Service without expectation

When Swami Satyananda first went to his guru’s ashram, Swami Sivananda told him to be ready for sannyasa. When he asked what was expected of him after being initiated as a sannyasin, Swami Sivananda told him, “Nothing. Just keep on doing the same things you would do normally to survive, such as managing the kitchen, correspondence, finances, buildings and so on.” Swami Satyananda asked why he needed to stay in the ashram to do this work. Why not go home and do it for his family? Swami Sivananda replied, “When you work for your own satisfaction, you accumulate tensions, stresses, desires, expectations and negativity, and bind yourself more and more in karma in your mind. When you do the same thing with devotion and dedication and without imposing personal expectations on the action, then you become free.”

Swami Sivananda’s statement is very relevant today. When we perform our normal actions, our mental behaviour and energy are scattered because there are too many distractions. We always associate with the outcome of the action, which increases our expectations. When these expectations are

not fulfilled, we face a crisis in our lives. However, when we practise karma yoga, awareness of action, the dissipated nature of the mind is focused. The mental energies are focused on the performance of the karma, and there are no expectations, no personal involvement. Rather there is a sense of service, a deep love and faith in the service.

Karma yoga is not normal action involving attachment and expectation. In karma yoga the karma or action becomes a service in which you try to improve and give your best with compassion, love and sympathy. In serving you try to become more creative and not ignore the things you take for granted. In reality karma yoga is an attitude of service. It is not expecting an outcome or result, but developing an attitude where you are centred in yourself. When this attitude of service is combined with compassion and the feeling of love, it becomes karma yoga. Service with the desire for a better result remains karma. If there is no understanding, no focus or goal and no productivity, it only remains an action which gives birth to another reaction. However, when karma is performed with an attitude of service, love and compassion, the karma becomes yoga. This attitude is attained through the practices of yoga.

We are not speaking of karma yoga, jnana yoga or bhakti yoga as independent chapters, but as integrated development of the human personality which occurs when we adopt yogic principles and attitudes. Practise normal yoga, work to improve the quality of your being, and you will discover that there are no simple solutions, but only intelligent choices to be made in order to march ahead in life.

First Mental Peace Then Social Peace

Yoga is not only a set of practices that we do every day for a certain period of time in the morning, afternoon or evening. To live in a yogic manner we have to adopt the principles and attitudes of yoga in our lives. Living yogically means having a balanced, peaceful and creative mind. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of head, heart and hands, and how to improve the quality and creativity of these three faculties, without which we cannot be classified as human beings.

The purpose of practising asana, pranayama, relaxation and meditation in the morning or at night is to re-educate the body, mind and emotions in order to transform the character, behaviour and thinking patterns. Continue to do your practices and identify with the experiences that you gain. Connect with your body, with your mind and your energy. According to yogic principles, different levels of experience and realization take place in the course of our yoga practice.

The body is not only composed of matter. Take the example of milk. If you want butter, curd or cheese, you have to churn the milk to separate and extract the different items. You have to see yourself and your body in the same way. The body contains energy and consciousness, but they cannot be extracted until you undergo a process of transforming the basic characteristics of your nature.

When we practise asanas, there is some form of extraction of awareness, of consciousness. When we practise breathing

techniques, there is some form of awareness of the vitality and pranic energy inherent in the body, which becomes more vibrant and dynamic with the practice of pranayama. When we practise relaxation, we connect with our inner nature. In yoga nidra, when we rotate our awareness around the different parts of the body, there is a connection with our consciousness. After all, how many times during the day do you become aware of and visualize your little toe in your mind? After doing yoga nidra people have said, “I connected with my body for the first time. I realized that my little toe has consciousness. I realized that my little finger has energy in it.” In yoga nidra there is a connection of consciousness with the body, in meditation there is a connection of awareness with the mental states, and you practise that yoga every day as a technique to connect with yourself.

There is another dimension of yoga related to individual peace of mind and peace in society. There have been two main exponents of classical yoga. The first was Patanjali, who two thousand years ago codified the process of yoga in the form of the *Yoga Sutras*, known as the eightfold path of yoga. The second was Swami Sivananda who developed an eightfold path of yoga after Patanjali and made it more external and practical. Patanjali's is the traditional, classical system and Swami Sivananda's is the practical, expressive system. These two systems of yoga have to be taken together.

Patanjali yoga for self-transformation: yama and niyama

When we think of mental peace, we have to identify with Patanjali's yoga because it provides a way to train and educate ourselves. The first two stages of Patanjali's yoga are yama and niyama. *Yama* means restraint, in the sense that you restrain the normal behaviour of your personality and mind and convert it into a creative and universal awareness. Restraint also means ensuring proper growth. For example, if you ride a horse without reins, you will be unable to control it and will simply have to go wherever the horse takes you, but when you use reins, you are able to guide the horse. The role of the reins is to restrain the horse's normal behaviour and ensure that you can guide it. That is known as yama.

We have to learn how to restrain our thoughts, behaviour and attitudes. The greatest weakness of human beings is being easily influenced, and in that state you don't connect with your understanding or wisdom. If you hear a negative remark about someone, you will believe it even though it has not been your own experience, because your mind and inner perception will be influenced by the negative words. Where is your wisdom and understanding at that point? You believe somebody else without relying on your own personal experience. When other people influence us, we don't come close to our own understanding, which is one of the greatest weaknesses of human character. However, in the practice of *yama*, in restraint, we rely on our own wisdom and perception to improve the negative connotations and negative states of our mind.

Yoga has defined more than twenty *yamas*, but Patanjali has defined five main ones. The first *yama* is *satya*, truthfulness. Your attempt to discover the real you is the attempt to identify with truth. You begin by being truthful with yourself. A candle doesn't have to think, "I will provide light in the dark." In order to provide light, the candle burns itself. In the same manner, you have to make an effort to transform the natural patterns of your life and harmonize them in order to come to a stage of realization. Truth is broad, not limited to a particular idea or conditioning of your mind or character. Truth represents an open mind which filters the information and just takes in what is necessary for its improvement. Just as you eat whatever you want to eat and the body assimilates whatever it needs to assimilate and eliminates the rest, assimilation and filtering of an experience or understanding has to happen before you are able to release the negative expressions and experiences of the mind.

Being free from expressions of violence is another restraint, known as *ahimsa*. The *Yoga Sutras* define three other *yamas* or restraints to modify the mental behaviour: *asteya*, non-stealing, *aparigraha*, simple living, and *brahmacharya*, keeping the highest ideal in mind.

After the yamas, come the five *niyamas* or disciplines: *santosha* or contentment; *shaucha*, cleanliness or purity of body, mind and environment; *swadhyaya*, self-analysis, self-study or self-observation; and *Ishwara pranidhana*, surrender. The yamas and niyamas represent the first two stages of Patanjali's yoga.

Asana and pranayama

The third stage of Patanjali's yoga is the physical component of *asana*, physical postures. In the first two stages, there is an effort to modify the mental behaviour and attitude by cultivating awareness, observation, and the willpower and strength to change the negative character into a positive one. Only then do we begin to work with the body. When the mind is in a state of balance, when the limiting and negative expressions of the mind have been substantially reduced by practising the yamas and niyamas, you then connect with your body by practising asana. Then asana does not only remain a physical practice, but also becomes a mental and spiritual practice. The fourth stage of Patanjali's yoga is *pranayama*, breathing techniques to increase the level of vitality and prana.

Pratyahara and dharana

The fifth and sixth stages of Patanjali's yoga, pratyahara and dharana, deal with the management and modifications of the mental subconscious and unconscious behaviours. In these stages, we observe our inner feelings and thoughts, emotions and desires and see how they can be balanced and channelled in a creative, constructive and positive direction where there is a feeling of happiness, contentment and hope. Training the mind happens in the stages of pratyahara and dharana. When the mind has been trained to experience the state of concentration, one-pointedness, it is not disturbed by external influences. When it is not disturbed by negativities generated within, the state of meditation develops, and we move into the fifth stage of Patanjali's yoga, the spiritual and meditative state of *dhyana*.

Let us define pratyahara, dharana and dhyana, the fifth, sixth and seventh stages respectively. *Pratyahara* is withdrawal of the senses from the outside connections which normally disturb the peaceful patterns of the mind by creating distractions and disturbances. That awareness is gradually withdrawn from its outer connections and focused inward. It is similar to the experience in yoga nidra where we start by extending our consciousness outside and then gradually internalize it. The process of internalization is the withdrawal of consciousness from its association in the world of objects to a state of inner tranquillity and stability.

After we are able to withdraw our mind and disassociate ourselves from the external factors which create disturbances and distractions, we come to the sixth stage where one-pointedness and concentration, *dharana*, is developed. According to Swami Satyananda, three distinct awarenesses are involved when we first practise concentration. The first is 'me', the individual who is practising the technique, 'I am aware of myself.' Second is the practice of awareness that we adopt to reach our goal, whether it is ajapa japa, antar mouna, yoga nidra or trataka. Third is the object of the practice, the goal that we set for ourselves. For example, if thought control is the goal, the technique of antar mouna is the process. The practitioner, who is aspiring for thought control, is the third item. So, in the beginning, you are aware of these three factors. Later, when you move into the state of dharana or concentration, then the concept of practice dissolves. Only you and the object remain.

Dhyana and samadhi

In the third state of meditation even 'me' disappears, and only the object remains as the main focus of identification and experience. In that meditative state there is only singular awareness, not dual awareness. When the object becomes predominant, the aim or goal becomes predominant and there is total merger of the mind with that identity, then it becomes samadhi. *Samadhi* is the highest meditative state in which you are able to transcend the experiences of the body, mind and emotions.

In the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna asks Krishna how a realized being who has attained samadhi, the highest meditative state, lives, eats, walks, sleeps and interacts. Krishna tells him that a realized being lives in the world like an ordinary person, following the laws of nature and matter, not confronting or trying to alter them, but living in harmony with them. He interacts in the world like an ordinary person. The only difference is that, instead of being influenced by the world, he is able to influence the world. That is the only difference between a person who is realized and a person who is not realized.

This statement indicates that you drop your different ego identities and just be yourself. Being yourself is the hardest thing to do because we do not know how to be ourselves. We only identify with the different ego identities which we believe to represent 'me', but does that ego really represent you? The ego is only a very small part of this experience in the vast scheme of creation, only one fourth of the experience. However, we continue to identify with it and feel happy and content that it is 'me'.

Patanjali's yoga is a process of personal self-transformation, a process of experiencing and experimenting with internal peace. From the yogic perspective, the experience of peace is the outcome of a balanced and harmonious mind, not a confused mind. Once we are able to experiment and experience the inner peace we attain through perfection in the various systems of yoga, the journey continues.

Sivananda yoga – expressive yoga

What happens after self-transformation? The yoga of Sivananda now begins where the yoga of Patanjali stops. What is the eightfold path of Sivananda's expressive yoga? After samadhi, total identification and merger of consciousness with the creative nature, we now express externally what we have gained internally in the process of self-transformation. The first component of Sivananda yoga is *seva*, selfless service, second is the cultivation of unconditional love, third is the ability to give and to share, fourth is the effort to attain inner

purity, fifth is to become good, sixth is to do good, and the seventh and eighth components are again meditation and finally realization.

Seva

Seva, or service, becomes the medium by which you are able to express the inner peace, conviction and empathy that you have gained internally. Service is the culmination of your karma yoga, jnana yoga, raja yoga and bhakti yoga. In all these yogas you have practised previously, you simply isolate yourself from the world, close your eyes, and do what you need to do inside. There is nothing you do on the outside. But in expressive yoga, your internal gain has to be expressed externally.

Seva is not social service, but rather service of divinity in the garb of a human being if the right attitude is adopted. Nowadays Swami Satyananda tells us very clearly, “Don’t look for God in temples, churches and mosques, but try to see God permeating the entire creation of which we are a part.” He says very clearly, “My God doesn’t live in temples but in the streets. If you can help a person who is sick, you are serving God in that person. If you are able to feed a person who is hungry, you are feeding God in that person. If you ignore a person who is suffering, you are ignoring God in that person.” The idea of God being in each and every person is the realization and connection with the divinity in everything, the cause of life itself. Service becomes a means of expressing our connection with the divine nature.

Unconditional love

As we evolve more in service, the outcome is the development of unconditional love, which is not something to be aspired for. This quality of love awakens within you naturally as you purify and harmonize yourself to overcome your limitations. You do not aspire for unconditional love; rather it becomes the outcome of your inner realization and expresses itself naturally and spontaneously.

When Swami Satyananda renounced the ashram, he said, “I have fulfilled my duty. I am not the director or a leader of

a movement or an ashram anymore. I am just an ordinary sannyasin.” He left the ashram with only two dhotis and one hundred and eight rupees, and travelled throughout the country as a wandering sannyasin. At one point, he had a vision of where he was to live. He told Swami Satsangi of the vision and asked her to locate and acquire the land, where he would live in isolation doing sadhana. Within a week, the entire process of purchasing and registering the land was completed, which is an extraordinary feat in India.

One day, in the middle of his sadhana, Paramahamsaji called us and said, “In a nearby village, there is a woman with three children. Her house has burned down and her husband is dead. She has become a widow and has lost everything. Locate her, construct a house for her and assure her that her children will be taken care of.” Now how did Swami Satyananda know what had happened? He never left the property or met anybody, but in meditation he experienced the woman’s suffering and instructed us to locate her immediately. We went from village to village and located the family. We found the woman living with her three children under a tree. Within ten days, we had constructed a house for her and rehabilitated her.

Now, some would say this event seems like a miracle. However, the event is more an expression of Paramahamsaji’s connection with other people and his drive to help them overcome their miseries. When one suffers and cries out for help, that cry definitely reaches God, who then diverts that cry to somebody who is capable of handling it. This can only happen when classical yoga and the attitude of service have been perfected and unconditional love awakens in the heart. A person who has never seen the woman or children feels the suffering, hears the cry and reaches out to help them. That is unconditional love, the second component of Sivananda yoga, expressive yoga.

Giving and sharing

The third component of Sivananda yoga is giving. In the Upanishads, there is a story of a meeting between a repre-

sentative of the gods, a representative of the demons and a representative of the humans. They said, “Look, we have inherited this planet and we, the divine, the demonical and the human, are going to live together. Let us seek clear instructions from our father about how to improve our lives.” Suddenly there was a thunder clap. Each one heard a particular word, which they understood as being their instruction from God, and went to convey the message to their people.

The representative of the gods heard the message as being to learn restraint. Divine beings live very well and enjoy their virtuous fruits, so for them restraint was the message. For the demonical personality, the message from God was to learn compassion. We are demonical by nature, we like to kill, to steal. Today’s terrorists create suffering and distress. So the message for them is to learn compassion, not to harm or kill anybody and not to make anyone suffer. The representative of the humans heard the message from God as learn to give. Human beings like to accumulate, which leads to selfishness and selfish desires. We can get rid of that self-centred quality by learning how to give. So, learning to give and to share is the third quality of spiritual life.

Purify

In Munger, Swami Satyananda worked for the propagation of classical yoga. However, since leaving the ashram, he has been teaching us by example how to live Sivananda yoga. When you are able to give, you purify yourself internally by overcoming your selfish and self-centred aspects, and that purity transforms you from a human being into a divine being. That purity transforms the individual from a material being into a spiritual being.

Be good, do good, meditate, realize

After serve, love, give and purify come being good and doing good. Then comes meditation again, not as a way of re-educating yourself, but with the idea of merging and becoming one with the cosmic reality. It is possible. When God created the earth, one person was made out of salt. This

person decided to discover the depth of the ocean, so he dived in, but instead of discovering the depth of the ocean, he became one with the ocean. The concentration of salt is the same on the shore, in the middle, at the bottom, or on the other shore. That merger is what is experienced in the meditative state of Sivananda yoga, not the training, not the focusing, not the identification, but completeness and wholeness. As such, social peace is the outcome of personal peace. Social peace can be attained when we are able to transcend our self-centred lifestyles and mentalities and reach out to help others in need.

Social peace is the outcome of personal peace

This is the teaching of Swami Satyananda, who is now living the yoga of Swami Sivananda. While he was performing his sadhana, he heard a clear mandate, “Provide your neighbours with the same facilities that I have provided for you.” He called us and said, “This is what I have heard and it is very clear as to the direction of my life and my work. I want you to help me because I am penniless. I am a sannyasin. What has God given me? Shelter, clothes, food and education. The message is to give to others what I have been given.”

Sivananda Math, an institution dedicated to the ideals of Swami Sivananda, became active in Rikhia. At first, we adopted a few families. Later, as support and assistance were received from every corner of the world, we adopted more people and more villages. From 1993 to 2005 we have adopted about sixty villages and fifty thousand families whose entire wellbeing is our responsibility. The numbers are increasing every day. Paramahamsaji says that for a sannyasin, the entire world is his neighbourhood, but the spark has to be lit somewhere. If a candle is lit in a corner of a dark room, its luminosity will spread and illuminate the whole room. This mission of helping people is becoming more and more global, reaching out to areas where people really need help.

Sivananda Math has a plan for each member of the family. The elder of the family receives a monthly stipend of five hundred rupees and clothing according to the season. The

youngest member of the family is provided with educational facilities. The strongest family member is given the means of self-employment. All family members are given free medical care. The women of the family are trained in weaving and sewing, and can then sell their products in the market to earn money. For invalids, we open a shop and fill it with items worth about fifty thousand rupees, and tell them, this is your shop, sell, buy and survive. In this manner, there is a plan for each member of the family.

In these twelve years poverty has been eradicated from these fifty villages, because this is not charity. We believe that charity is the mother of poverty. Therefore, we inspire the people to stand on their own two feet and to be responsible for their lives. We provide them with opportunities. Not only has poverty been eradicated, but health and education have improved and crime has been reduced.

When we talk of social peace and personal peace, first we have to be able to experience that total wellbeing within ourselves. If we are able to develop our own feelings of love, compassion and humility, if we are able to develop the attitude of practical service, not emotional service, then this peace will also be reflected in our society. This experiment in Rikhia has yielded a lot of fruit. Many people have been inspired by the activities of Sivananda Math to work in their own communities. The development of human compassion and human empathy is beautiful. Although these people are few in number, they are increasing day by day. Maybe in ten years time, we will find such people in many of the cities and towns around the globe, sharing the spirit of Sivananda Math to improve the quality of life and to bring peace to society.

Therefore, social peace is not a subject that can be talked about. Rather, there has to be an effort to improve the quality of life of our fellow human beings. If you can make that effort, you can be a hundred percent sure that peace and contentment will reign in society. Nevertheless, individuals who are qualified with inner strength, clarity, compassion, affection and the desire to help humanity overcome its limitations have to come forward. In this way, we can transfer

the peaceful state of mind that we experience as a spiritual aspirant to the social environment, where our effort is to uplift and fulfil the needs of society. Society is only an extension of the individual mentality. So let us begin by improving our own mentality, and thus the effect will permeate down to human society. As spiritual aspirants contribute to a brighter world. This is the message of individual and social peace that yoga brings.

Satsang

Is a mother's love for her child unconditional? Should children be taught how to manage their emotions?

A mother's love is not unconditional love. It is a specific kind of relationship, a very intimate relationship where the mother may sacrifice many things for the welfare of her child. It is a specialized version of love, but it is not unconditional because the affection and love that you feel is reserved for your child, not for other children. If your child is sick, you are willing to sacrifice your time, to sit beside the child's bed all night, but you don't have the same feeling for somebody else who is sick. A mother's love is not unconditional even for her own child because she expects something, maybe not today, but she will have envisioned how the child will grow in the future and what the relationship will be.

What you can do is to cultivate the purity of your love, then one day it may become unconditional. Purity of love is the outcome of your wisdom. It is not saying to yourself, "My love is pure, I am pure." The ultimate expression of love is the purity of your nature in which you see yourself reflected in other people. In Sanskrit this is known as *atmabhava*.

If there is an accident, your care and concern will be limited to your own child, not to the other children who may be in a more serious condition. Would you call that love unconditional? There is no such thing as unconditional love for someone who is unable to see their own image in another person. You are attracted to your child because you see your

reflection in that child. Therefore, your relationship with your child is more specific, and with other people it is broad-based and general. Even in the relationship with your own family the love is conditioned.

There is no need to teach children how to manage their emotions. Have you taught them how to be angry, how to be jealous, how to hate? Have you taught them how to love, how to be compassionate? No, they have learned it by themselves; their expression is untainted by your influence. What you can do is show them the right way to express their feelings and emotions, and for that you have to stop being a parent to your child

As a parent, you are the judge, jury and executioner! You tell your child, “Don’t do this, do that.” It is always “No.” Eighty percent of the relationship parents have with their children is negative. Very few parents support their children to achieve their aspirations and goals in life. Each step of the way, we try to impose our conditions on the child, forgetting that they come with their own karmas and destinies. Therefore, if you want your children to develop properly, be their friend. If you can be a friend, not a father or mother, not a judge, jury or executioner, then you can give the child the right opportunity and environment in which to grow as a balanced person with confidence in your support. Therefore, be a friend and not a parent to your child.

Often we find ourselves in very difficult situations surrounded by individuals or an environment with negative energies. Frequently we feel crossed emotions. How can we handle this? Are there any practices we can use?

From time to time we find ourselves reacting and responding to difficult situations. If we are able to gradually develop a non-reactive nature, then situations can improve a lot. How can we develop a non-reactive nature? In order to avoid the clash of egos, there is a very simple technique. When you go to bed at night, before you close your eyes do a short five minute practice. See the events of the day as they have occurred in sequence from the time you woke up to the time

you went to bed. See your entire day as a movie, objectively. See what kind of conflicts, problems and confrontations you have had. How did you respond to those situations? If you find the same situation happening again, how can you respond in a different way so that you are able to convey your viewpoint in a congenial manner and not clash with other viewpoints? The improvement has to be in you, not in the external environment or in other people. If you can develop the ability to take a step back and look at the situation before taking a step forward, you will be in a better position to handle difficult situations.

So begin with yourself. Rather than changing the outer, change the inner to which you have reacted and are still reacting. The moment you change the inner, the outer will sort itself out. Try this practice every night for one month and you will notice a difference in your own attitudes, perceptions, thoughts and approach to managing and dealing with situations. When you succeed in doing that, you will know that you are going in the right direction.

Karma yoga is defined as action motivated by love and compassion. Does the word humility have anything to do with karma yoga? Secondly, is only work done for guru, divinity or the higher being called karma yoga, or can our daily activities at work and at home also become karma yoga?

The concept of karma yoga contains the idea of humility. As you work, as you improve and as you become aware of your participation and involvement in society, one of the effects of karma yoga is to make you aware of your ego and arrogance and learn how to manage it. The moment you are working with and managing your ego and arrogance, the natural outcome is humility.

When trees are laden with fruit, the branches lower themselves. Humility is an integral aspect of the karma yoga experience or practice. Rather than specifying humility, we simply say strive to be aware of your karmas, of your performances and actions. Try to improve them, to be more creative, to be broader and more expansive in your

approach. Try to achieve perfection in what you do without any expectations of the result. All these principles lead to humbleness. If karma yoga is practised in the right spirit, the first outcome will be humility.

Karma yoga is not something that you do for your guru or for God, but it is how you train yourself to perceive your involvement in society. Right now, 'me' is at the centre of your activities. At home when you are cleaning the floor, washing clothes, cooking food or doing other activities, if you can observe your mind and your reactions in relation to the performance and manage them, then that is karma yoga. Karma yoga gives a greater sense of commitment and responsibility, an awareness that regardless of the situation, the intention is to do things properly. That is the attitude of karma yoga. So karma yoga is a concept that can and should be applied in all situations at all times.

Giving this lecture is my karma yoga. People give classes and that is their karma yoga. People administrate, and if they do it properly, that is their karma yoga. Karma yoga simply means becoming aware of your performance and trying to ensure that it is done to the best of your ability, with utmost perfection and without any expectations in expressing your creative self. If karma yoga is practised properly, the influences of the ego will be reduced and humility will develop.

What is the yogic point of view on intuition and how can we cultivate and expand it?

Intuition is not something that is developed. First, you have to learn how to manage your intellect, then intuition will develop. The problem is that we try to develop something greater than our mind can handle. If you currently have an intuitive ability with certain flashes, that intuition will be overshadowed or clouded by your intellect. Questions will arise about whether the voice you are hearing or the intuition is correct or incorrect, whether you should follow it or not. The moment awareness is clouded by intellect, it is no longer intuition. Therefore, stop thinking about intuition, stop thinking about astral travel, telepathy, clairvoyance or

clairaudience, stop thinking about psychic powers which fascinate and attract you, because that is not the purpose of spiritual development.

If the purpose is to increase your sense of ego, then the doors of intuition and creativity will always remain closed. In order to open the door, all you need is the key which opens the lock. If you have the key, especially if it is the master key, you can open all doors. So make an attempt not to be intuitive, but to gain the master key, which will be your wealth. In the normal process of working with kundalini yoga, as you awaken and as you experiment with the different chakras, you will find that you will suddenly have that master key. If it happens naturally, then that is the right way because purification will have taken place initially, and your mind will be more balanced in order to handle that state of intuition. You will be free from the other trappings and cloudiness of the intellect which overshadow the intuitive ability. So, aspire to gain the master key and then see which doors open.

For somebody on the spiritual path, what should their relationship or approach to sexual life with the partner be?

There are four basic instincts: craving, fear, sleep and sexual activity. You are asking how to manage sexual life, not about craving, sleep or fear. Just as you eat your food normally and interact with other people in the normal manner, why should you emphasize sexuality and ignore the other instincts? According to tantra, sexual activities take place for pleasure, for progeny or for sublimation of consciousness. If the purpose is progeny, you know what to do. If the purpose is pleasure, you also know what to do. If the purpose is sublimation, you do not know how to do that. So first you have to live a yogic life and understand the attractions of the mind.

When you are able to manage the attractions in the mind, sexual activity becomes natural. You are able to discriminate between your needs. You know that there is something more than pleasure and progeny. This understanding will develop in the course of time with meditation, with internalization and with the awakening of your consciousness and wisdom.

Yoga does not reject the normal behaviours of the instincts. Yoga only teaches how to channel the energies which express themselves in the form of fear, craving, sleep and sexual activity. There is no obsession with any of these things. If there is obsession, then you had better start with pawanmuktasana again.

Can you explain the practice and tradition of kriya yoga?

There are two main traditions of kriya yoga in the world today: Paramahansa Yogananda's tradition and Swami Sivananda's tradition. Paramahansa Yogananda's is a simplified version of kriya yoga. Not all the techniques or theories are taught because the entire concept of kriya yoga, energy and chakras can become too complex to grasp. So they teach a simplified version which is very effective, but not complete. It takes you to a point where you can get in touch with your internal energies. The kriya yoga of Swami Sivananda, as developed by Swami Satyananda, is the classical, unmodified kriya yoga that has been taught in the tradition throughout the ages.

The purpose of kriya yoga is the synthesis of all the yogas; there are components of hatha yoga, raja yoga, kundalini yoga. Our body and mind are not yet adapted to practise this kriya yoga. Before starting kriya yoga, first you need to perfect hatha yoga, then you need to achieve a certain state in raja yoga, mind management, so that as you practise kriya yoga and psychic experiences begin to happen, you are able to handle them more efficiently, effectively and easily, and to understand them. Each experience of kriya yoga is a map of your spiritual journey. Therefore, kriya yoga has always been treated as a sacred and secret subject, mainly because our non-transcendental brain is incapable of experiencing the transcendental reality. So, before practising kriya yoga, practise the other yogas to change your non-transcendental brain into a transcendental brain.

Living Yoga

During this convention we have dealt not only with the material or physical aspect of yoga, but we have tried to present yoga as a means of integrating the qualities of head, heart and hands in order to improve our lives, our environment and our society. Yoga has to be understood in this way. We have covered raja yoga as a means of mind management, bhakti yoga as a means of emotional management and karma yoga as the means of improving productivity and efficiency. We have also covered the attitudinal yoga of Swami Sivananda, because through that we are able to not only practise yoga, but to live yoga.

Asanas for a healthy body

In yoga, *asanas* are defined as postures in which physical comfort and stability can be maintained. In order to come to this point, you have to use the basic components of the postures to enhance the capacities of the body. Although in the beginning many practices are taught to prepare the body, at the end you only need to choose a few techniques to ensure optimum health. We recommend that five asanas be done regularly by healthy people, who are not suffering from any physiological or psychological disorders.

The first practice is *tadasana*, the palm tree pose. Everybody can do *tadasana* to improve the circulation, to release tensions and to feel light in the body. If we observe our body posture during the day, we will find there is compression

of the joints. When we sit, there is spinal compression, which remains throughout the day. When we get up in the morning, we sit in the bathroom, then we sit at the breakfast table, then in the car, in the office, at lunch and again in the car. Tadasana stretches and loosens up the entire spine, releases congestion and frees any tension in the spinal cord.

The second practice is *tiryaka tadasana*, the swaying palm tree pose, which is very effective for massaging and loosening up the side muscles that we rarely use in our daily activities, and for compressing and stretching the digestive organs. It acts like a sponge. Stagnant blood is released and there is a feeling of lightness and physical wellbeing.

Kati chakrasana, the waist rotating pose, is the third practice. It provides a twist for the lower back, the upper back, and the hips. It is especially good for people who sit in chairs a lot, which hampers circulation in the waist and thigh regions.

The fourth practice is *surya namaskara*, salutations to the sun. These twelve postures are mainly forward bending and backward bending.

These are the most effective practices to maintain a healthy body. The first one involves traction. The second involves lateral stretching. The third involves twisting to release spinal tension. The fourth involves forward and backward bending. These are the only asanas you need to practise regularly, nothing beyond this. At the most you can include an inverted posture like *sarvangasana*, the shoulder stand pose, or the easy shoulder stand in which the legs are simply raised, keeping the spine on the floor, or you can even attempt *sirshasana*, the head stand pose. After completing the five practices, lie down in *shavasana*, the corpse pose, and relax.

These asanas are most effective if done in the morning immediately after waking up. Drink two glasses of room temperature water first. The water cleans the digestive tract and creates pressure which expels the waste matter from the body and the toxins we accumulate at night while asleep. So, all you need is two glasses of water in the morning and these five practices.

Pranayama

After completing the asanas two breathing techniques need to be practised. The first is *nadi shodhana*, alternate nostril breathing. The breath plays a very important role in health. Normally, a human being takes between eleven and fifteen breaths per minute. The normal inhalation and exhalation is between three to five seconds, but when we lengthen our breathing pattern, we inhale and exhale slowly and deeply, which allows the air to remain in the lungs for a longer period. It facilitates the process of oxygen absorption and purification of the blood.

Alternate nostril breathing is to be done in the morning. The system is simple. You breathe in and out for a specified number of seconds, say five seconds for the incoming breath and five seconds for the outgoing breath. If five seconds is too little, it can be increased to seven seconds. If that is too little, increase it to ten seconds. You inhale for ten seconds through the left nostril and exhale for ten seconds through the left nostril, inhale again through the right and exhale through the left. For this breathing technique to be effective and to allow the body to separate the gases from the air and to absorb the oxygen, you need to practise a minimum of ten rounds.

The second breathing practice is *bhramari pranayama*, humming bee breath, which increases the output of melatonin and relaxes the nervous system. The cerebral activities undergo a transformation, the beta activity of the brain changes into alpha, and into theta. It is the most effective technique for removing psychological tension and stress. It is very good for office workers, who can even practise it in the bathroom. Do it about ten times. Also practise it before going to sleep at night and you will find the quality of sleep changes. There will be deeper relaxation and you will feel much fresher when you wake up. These are the two pranayamas we advise for normal healthy people, not more.

Yoga nidra and meditation

At night, after you come home from the office, or from drinks and dinner, when you are lying in bed ready to sleep, practise

yoga nidra. If you have a cassette, follow the instructions and go to sleep. If not, you can at least guide your attention through the different parts of the body and release the tensions, just as in the practice of yoga nidra.

After you have relaxed yourself and before sleeping, move into a meditative practice for a few minutes, either sitting or lying down. There are two meditative practices which can be combined in one technique. In the first part of the meditation, which you do flat on your bed, you begin to observe the events of the day, from the time you woke up in the morning until the time you went to bed at night. What you ate, what clothes you wore, who you met, what you spoke about, whether it was a congenial discussion or a heated discussion, what your understanding and approach was as well as that of the other person. View the entire day's activities as if you are seeing a movie. Then pick a crisis point, where you faced some anxiety, some aggression, some negativity, and think about it for a moment. Ask yourself, if you were in the same situation again, how you would deal with it in a better way. You may not find the solution right away, but in the course of time through self-observation you will be able to improve your responses and reactions.

After you have completed this part of the meditation in five minutes, again become aware of the breath. Practise the mantra with the breath, with inhalation and exhalation, for five minutes. The final practice is yoga nidra, which completes your yoga practice for the day. It is as simple as this.

Becoming established in yoga

Practise the physical and respiratory practices in the morning to re-energize and revitalize, and the relaxation and concentration techniques at night to release the stresses and tensions of the day and to sleep peacefully. If you can sleep peacefully, live peacefully and digest your food peacefully, then you will have established yourself in yoga.

This is the system you need to incorporate in your daily routine. Apart from this, if possible you should go on a retreat for a few days every year, not a vacation. A vacation is a means

of enjoyment, but a retreat is a means of retraining yourself, where you can just be by yourself, analyzing, observing and giving priority to your needs. Define what your priorities are, experiment with your mind, experiment with your body, and return with a fresh attitude.

Yoga is not escaping or running away from life, but running into life with the arms and eyes open. If we can run into life with more clarity and conviction, positivity and creativity, then we will live life fully. As a yogic attitude to adopt, do not avoid pain and suffering because they create a balance. If there is suffering, happiness comes to create a balance; if there is happiness, suffering comes to create a balance. Why? Because we identify too much with our suffering or with our joy, and we are not objectively aware of these two states. We become part of them and therefore we suffer. When happiness comes we cling to it and do not want to let it go, because we fear that if it goes again, we will suffer. That is a human weakness in relation to happiness and suffering.

There has to be a proper mix. Adopt the following attitude. Have enough happiness to make you joyous and contented, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human and enough hope to again make you happy. Do not run away from trials and difficulties, but look forward to them.

Cycle of life

This is the cycle of life that we learn to appreciate. As yogis we learn to appreciate whatever life gives us, and not reject or try to renounce anything. Life is a process of acceptance, accommodation, adjustment and marching forward with one's head held high. This is the message of yoga. With this attitude, conviction and strength, we can live yoga. Therefore, give yoga a chance in your life and give evolution a chance in your life.

For evolution to have a chance, you need to leave it alone. If you take a seed out of the ground every day to see whether it has sprouted or not, nothing will happen. That is what we do

with our evolution. We do not give it any chance whatsoever, because by the time something has become stable, our mind has diverted to something new and different which we think and feel is better. In this way we create fifty holes one-foot deep in order to search for water and never find water in any of them. But if you are able to dig one hole fifty-feet deep, you will find there are greater possibilities for obtaining water in that one hole.

We know that the happiest people do not necessarily have the best of everything, yet they make the most of everything that comes their way. Let us make the most of everything that comes our way, and not necessarily look for the best. If it comes, it is God's grace. So let us make the most of our time together in yoga because we only have one life to live. Fifty percent of life is spent sleeping. Thirty percent is spent in our jobs and professions, in eating and drinking. Only five percent is an effort to improve ourselves. So let us make the most of that five percent.

A rose flower is beautiful but the stem is full of thorns. Just as you look at the beauty of the rose and ignore the thorns, admire the beauty of life by ignoring the thorns that sometimes prick you. Regardless of the trials and tribulations you may face, make a sankalpa that you will learn yoga, live yoga, and accept and identify with the beauty of life.

Yoga in the Twenty-First Century

Santillana Foundation, Bogota, May 19, 2005

In the past Colombia had a very rich yogic tradition. The ancient cultures of this land used yoga as a means of internalizing awareness and discovering the inner self. In the course of time, due to changes in society and the global environment, the ancient tradition of yoga was lost in many countries. However, yoga continued to be preserved in India by people known as sannyasins. Sannyasa is the tradition that I represent. Sannyasa is not a religious order, but an order of people who have renounced the material world to propagate, experience and experiment with the spiritual world. It should be understood that yoga is a science that deals with the management and development of the human personality, harmony of body and mind and experience of spirit. The integration of head, heart and hands is the theme of yoga in the twenty-first century.

The foundation of yoga is spiritual experience, not in abstract terms, but in very clear and precise terms. One day my guru, Swami Satyananda, gave me the duty of looking after the ashram garden while he was away on tour. I was seven or eight at the time and undertook the duty to the best of my ability. When he returned, he asked me what had happened, because all the trees, plants, flowers and fruits had dried up. I told him that every day I had dusted the leaves, removed the insects, smelt the flowers and polished the fruits until they shone. My guru said, "I appreciate your efforts, but just answer one question: did you water the plants?"

That was my first lesson about yoga and spiritual life and about this physical life. My teacher explained that the important part of a tree is not the external part that we see, but the roots which are underground and invisible. The roots sustain the tree and as long as they are nourished, the tree can face any situation, but if the roots are neglected and forgotten, the tree will become weak and fall down in a tempest. Our life is also like that because we identify with the body, senses, mind and emotions, which are the external manifestations of our personality. We ignore and are not aware of the greater potential that exists within us, which is recognized as spirit.

Spirit is not something abstract and vague, but part of the evolution of consciousness. Life is a process of constant evolution at different levels. Evolution is the outcome of a focused and illuminated mind. We all come with the same possibilities. God has been very generous to us. We have within us the same qualities that Christ and Buddha had. The only difference is that they were experimenting with those qualities and we have ignored that aspect of our life. They were continually refining themselves while we have stagnated at one point. This is the barrier we all face as human beings, the limitation that we cannot overcome in our lives.

Aim of yoga

When yoga appeared, it was to discover that inner potential, which is spiritual, not material. At the same time, those who developed yoga realized that growth had to take place in all dimensions of existence. The body needs to be harmonized so that it can manage illness, disease and physical stress. To manage physical imbalances, the physical postures were developed, which have become famous worldwide. Many people do them as stretching exercises or as aerobic exercises to experience lightness in the body and freedom from tension and tightness. Physical harmony will alter and influence the activity of the brain, and this cerebral and physical harmony will alter the mental behaviour. In the process of harmonizing the personality, the mind also comes in tune with its inner strengths. This is the beginning of yoga.

The classical literature states that yoga begins with mind management. It does not say that self-realization is the aim of yoga, but clearly states that the aim is managing the mental behaviour. Desiring self-realization is like a blind man wanting to see the sun when his real need is for eyesight with which he can see not only the sun, but the entire creation in its full glory. If my need is to obtain vision, then in terms of yoga my aim becomes to prepare and transform myself, to change my nature and the restrictive components of my life. How we can realize and manage our mind, body and emotions is the main theme of yoga. The rest is only the outcome of this harmony.

In the past, this concept was not made clear by yoga teachers and therefore yoga was seen as a mystical, abstract subject. Fifty years ago yoga was not well known, even in India. In the 1960s it began to be propagated by those who realized that yoga was the need of people everywhere, then and in the future. Awareness of yoga became more widespread. At the same time, there were many taboos associated with yoga because nobody really knew what yoga was. To play safe, people only practised the physical aspect because the body felt light, vibrant and energetic. That is how hatha yoga first became popular. Today there are many brands of hatha yoga around the world, and most people only understand the physical aspect. Yoga was practised in this way until approximately the end of the twentieth century.

Integral yoga: head, heart and hands

At that time an important event took place in the history of yoga. A yoga university was established in India. This was the fulfilment of an idea conceived of by Swami Sivananda, who was a medical doctor and a philosopher. He believed that yoga should be established in scientific terms and that people should understand the practical and scientific aspects as well as the philosophical and abstract aspects of yoga. Swami Sivananda's vision was carried forward and developed by my guru, Swami Satyananda.

Swami Satyananda was one of the first exponents of yoga to incorporate the mental, psychological and psychic

aspects for personality transformation, for the management of physical, psychological and spiritual imbalances. He also propagated how yoga could be applied in society. This is called integral yoga or Satyananda Yoga.

The main theme of integral Satyananda Yoga is awakening the faculties of head, heart and hands. The head represents intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, awareness and observation. The heart represents feelings, emotions and sentiments. The hands represent the ability to act, to perform and to create. The ability to manage these three components of our life is the need of the twenty-first century, because this balance will make a person complete.

Changing the habits

Saying that Satyananda Yoga is head, heart and hands doesn't mean that we don't practise hatha yoga or physical yoga; it is part of the process. The first component is training and disciplining our mental behaviour, attitudes and involvement in the material world. This happens with the practice of two disciplines known in yoga as *yamas*, self-restraints, and *niyamas*, inner disciplines. These two disciplines are responsible for transforming the mental conditioning and habits. Changing even a small habit requires a lot of willpower. You can reduce its intensity, but it is difficult to completely eradicate it. For this reason, yoga speaks of self-restraint and inner discipline to reduce the intensity and grip of these conditionings which hamper the expression of our natural creativity. According to the classical texts, this is the beginning of yoga.

Attaining physical wellbeing

In the second component, we begin to work with the body to provide the physical organs with health and wellbeing. Clinical investigations by medical professionals have shown that many psychosomatic illnesses and problems can be managed with yogic principles and practices. In many countries yoga is in the front line of therapies along with allopathic treatments. Yoga is used in the management of respiratory problems such as bronchitis, asthma and eosinophilia, for disorders

of the circulatory and cardiovascular systems, for digestive problems of the stomach, pancreas, kidneys and liver and for optimum functioning of all the organs. Currently, we are looking into the role of yogic practices in the management of cancer and AIDS.

These positive results lead us to understand that the yogic postures and breathing techniques help to remove the imbalances which cause illness and disease. However, yoga is not a therapy and should not be considered as such. Yoga is a process of managing oneself, not the symptoms of the disease. For example, a person with hypertension takes medicine to lower the blood pressure. As long as the medicine continues to be effective, the pressure stays down, but when the effect wears off, the pressure shoots up. Then we become addicted to the medicine, not by choice but by force, not because of wisdom but because of ignorance about how to handle ourselves. We are not treating the cause of the high blood pressure.

If we have diabetes, we take insulin. However, these are not therapies that cure, but therapies which manage the symptoms manifesting in the body. That is not yoga. Yoga does not manage the symptoms, yoga manages you. If you are able to lead a balanced life, these problems will leave you naturally. So yoga manages the person, not the disease. Therefore, yoga is not a therapy, but a lifestyle. If you are willing to change and adopt a disciplined lifestyle, then you become a yogi. To become a yogi you don't need to practise meditation; you just need to regulate your lifestyle.

Managing the mind: relaxation and concentration

The third component of yoga is mind management, which is the main theme of yoga. Even though the mind manages our entire life, only ten percent of the human brain is active and ninety percent is dormant. We live according to the dictates of this limited mind; the subconscious and unconscious realms are unknown to us. So when we are unable to meet our expectations and desires, insecurity, tension, stress, fear and conflict arise. We enter a state of high anxiety when dealing

with external situations, with relationships, with the demands of the ego. We think that in order to be happy, we need to have something and when we are unable to get it, frustration and aggression arise. Mentally, we are driven by a quest for happiness which only satisfies our own needs without any consideration for others. Such a mind is totally centred on itself, its needs, ambitions and desires. Possessiveness and selfishness manifest. Mental clarity becomes clouded and confusion and conflict take hold of the human personality.

In the mental aspect of yoga, we become aware of the four components of the mind: strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. We have the strength in us, but we are not aware of it. We identify with our weaknesses and shortcomings, and they become the focus rather than the strengths. We have certain needs, but we identify with ambitions, and we pursue them and ignore our needs. We are more aware of our ambitions and weaknesses and less of our strengths and needs.

How do we come out of this state? The yogic practices of relaxation and concentration increase awareness and observation of the mental behaviour, regulating the mind and its expressions. One trick to manage the mind is to understand the nature of the mind. The mind is like a drunken monkey bitten by a scorpion, agitated and suffering from unfulfilled expectations and desires. We are drunk on the senses and our expectations. The scorpion which gives us pain is the unfulfilled desires and expectations.

Mental yoga begins with a very simple relaxation practice, known as yoga nidra. With relaxation comes concentration, the focusing of the mental faculties and awareness to achieve what we need and aspire for in life. When the mind is illuminated, awareness spreads in all directions. If a light is focused to a point, it becomes like a laser beam strong enough to cut steel or soft enough to perform laser surgery on the eye. The same effect can be had by focusing the energies and the dissipated awareness of the mind at one point, in one direction, to fulfil one's objective. That is known as concentration. So relaxation and concentration are the means to transform the nature and behaviour of the mind.

Spiritual wisdom and applied knowledge

The fourth aspect of yoga is spiritual understanding. Spiritual understanding is the outcome of wisdom, which is applied knowledge. The knowledge is there, but it is never applied. We know what is right and wrong for us, but do we do the right thing? So many things damage the health and mind but still we persist in our habits. Cigarette smoking is one example. There are thousands of others where we know what is right and wrong, but cannot resolve the issue and be satisfied. Therefore, spiritual evolution begins with understanding and applied knowledge, wisdom. This is the meditative process leading to an altered state of consciousness.

Meditation gives a broader perspective. There was once a person with a peculiar mental problem. He did not like the world as it was. Too many things were big, too many were small, and he wanted to make them all the same. So we advised him to go up in a helicopter and look down if he wanted to see everything look the same. That is spiritual life. You go up in the helicopter of meditation. The higher you go, the greater your vision and perception. That is spiritual realization, not the handshake and encounter with God. What is necessary is to lift yourself from this level of perception and experience a higher dimension where you become a witness of yourself. You can keep going up as far as you want to go. God is infinity. Through the process of meditation you keep on growing in an infinite dimension.

Give evolution a chance

What is the relevance of yoga in our lives today? Management of the faculties and qualities of intellect, emotions and actions. The moment we manage the intellect, emotions and actions, we give evolution a chance in our lives. If you want a fruit tree, you plant the seed in the ground, leave it and don't dig it up every day to see if it is sprouting or not. For the seed to sprout, you have to give growth a chance. The key is to follow one chain of thought, experience and understanding, and allow it to evolve, to take over and to guide your actions. That is what you do in your professional life. If you want to excel in

professional life, you choose one subject and master it. If you change your mind every year, and switch from medicine to law, then to engineering the next year, and then to something else, you will be dissatisfied all your life. The same rule has to apply internally. Pursuing one direction gives evolution a chance to guide your life.

Therefore, integration of head, heart and hands is the theme of yoga in the twenty-first century, along with awareness of our spiritual nature, which has to be nourished like the roots of a tree. If you want to experience the depth of yoga, then immerse yourself in this idea: live, love and laugh. Normally we live, but we don't love and we don't laugh. There has to be one thought in mind: "No matter how many times I fall, I will always get up smiling and keep on walking." So, smile and walk.

Yoga and Expansion of Consciousness

National University of Bogota, May 19, 2005

Although yoga is a common word, it is a misunderstood subject. Many people around the world equate yoga with some form of physical exercise or culture. Sometimes yoga is thought to be part of an Asian or Eastern philosophy, belief or religion. However, yoga is a subject that deals with the evolution and development of the human personality. Therefore, it is important to understand the philosophy behind yoga.

Yoga is a process of uniting the different facets of the personality. Although many books define yoga as union of the individual self with the higher Self, the system described in the classical teachings of yoga is a very practical approach to understanding oneself. When I was in Colombia in the 1970s, we found evidence that yoga was practised in the pre-Columbian culture thousands of years ago. In the open air museum at San Agustin there are statues dating back many thousands of years, depicting the traditional yogic postures that we practise today. Symbols carved in the images explain the same theory and philosophy of yoga that we encounter today. Similar findings have been made in Scandinavia, Africa and in other Asian countries. When we tried to discover why these cultures had yoga as part of their tradition, an interesting fact emerged. The philosophy behind the practice of yoga was the same; both spoke of the two forces of consciousness and energy.

Consciousness, energy and the mind

Human beings are composed of these two energies, known as prana, the cosmic energy, and consciousness, the evolving energy. Energy is dynamic, but consciousness is static. Imagine that a blind person and a lame person want to enter the hall. What will they do? The lame person will direct the blind one, but with a difference. The lame person cannot walk, but has eyes. The blind person cannot see, but has legs. So the lame person will climb on the blind person's shoulders and act as the guide. This is the concept of consciousness and energy in yoga. Energy is dynamic, but it does not have cognition, awareness or consciousness. It has legs, but it is blind. Consciousness can see everything, but is unable to move by itself, without the help of energy. These two forces govern our body and mind, emotions and feelings.

The mind is an extension of the cosmic consciousness, the consciousness which is not material but spiritual, transcendental, beyond the senses, beyond the grasp of the interactive mind. The mind is the interactive consciousness which is continuously interacting with external sense objects and trying to find fulfilment. Our life is guided by the mind or interactive consciousness.

The mind experiences happiness, suffering, pain and joy. It creates desires, thoughts, ideas, philosophies and also religions. The mind rules our life in the form of attractions and repulsions. When we see something nice, we are attracted to it, but when we see something unpleasant, we reject it. The mind decides and expresses wisdom or ignorance. So in one sense we can say that all our experiences are guided by the mind. The body becomes the medium and the senses become the tool to achieve the goal set by the mind. This understanding is the beginning of yoga.

Classical definition of yoga

The classical texts define yoga as a process of channelling the expressions of the mind. What is yoga? Yoga is a process by which one can channel the forces of the mind. How? By following a discipline. What is the aim of that discipline? To

become established in one's real nature. These are the first three statements in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and they are the foundation of yoga philosophy and practice. If yoga were only physical exercises, these sutras would reflect the physical component of yoga. But they do not. If yoga were a religion, these introductory statements would reflect its religious inclination. But it is not so. Therefore, in the tradition yoga has to be seen as a discipline, a lifestyle and a science of practical living.

In order to create a system, a progressive practice, and in order to immerse oneself in yogic discipline, there is a beautiful sequence in yoga. Yoga begins with the body, goes to the mind and aims to realize the inner nature. The question may arise, if yoga deals with the mind, why does it begin with the body? Yoga looks at the wellbeing of the total personality, of the body, mind and spirit. Body, mind and spirit have to come together so that we can become a complete human being and experience the wholeness of life.

Yoga and physical stability

In the classical texts, *asanas* have been defined as physical postures in which one is comfortable and still. Physical stillness and comfort reflect the state of mind that the body is experiencing. Although initially we do dynamic movements to loosen up the stiff joints and muscles, the final aim is to reach a point of stillness and comfort where movement becomes irrelevant. It is very difficult to sit comfortably for an extended period of time without moving or changing the posture. Physical instability reflects a disturbed mental state. Take the example of a guitar. If the strings are not tuned, the sound will not be right. There has to be the correct tension. Each string has a different tension which creates different sounds and the combination of these sounds creates the music. The sound will be melodious only if the tension is correct. You can apply this principle to yourself and how you are able to tune your life.

What do we tune in our life? We start with our body because the normal daily routine creates stress in the body

and internal organs. We may lead a normal family and professional life, but we also confront different types of stress and if we are unable to manage them, our inner mental clarity and relaxation are affected. These tensions are so subtle that we do not even feel them until they manifest in the form of an irregularity, illness or imbalance in our body. We go to sleep at night with our worries, which builds up psychological stress, and in the course of time that tension becomes high blood pressure or insomnia. We try to manage that symptom by using different therapies, by taking medicines, but that is only treating the symptoms of tension and stress, not the causes, which are subtle, subconscious and unconscious.

In the 1970s, in Australia, a few cancer patients were taught physical postures, breathing techniques, deep yogic relaxation and meditation on the breath with positive results. It was found that meditation enabled people to isolate the past experiences which had led to the development of cancer, to cancel the effects of the past and to release the frozen energies producing the cancer. Meditation also brings about a profound reduction in anxiety, which allows the individual to mobilize their energies to fight the disease.

Practising the physical postures relaxes the disturbed, stressed organs of the body and increases immunity. The breathing techniques increase the body's vitality and assimilation of oxygen. Relaxation helps one to manage fears and insecurities. It is not the disease, but the fear of the disease, DIFS – Disease Induced Fear Syndrome, which kills a person. Deep relaxation or yoga nidra practice frees the mind and the cognitive faculties from the influence of fear, and the mind regains its vitality and energy and begins to influence the body to behave in the right manner. Meditation enables one to be more centred and to accept life.

In the UK a group of HIV positive patients were taught physical, respiratory, relaxation and meditative practices and many showed improvement. This indicates that through the practices of yoga, a process occurs in the body which harmonizes imbalances in the defective organs and allows

them to function again at an optimal level. Therefore, for physical wellbeing, which is the medium for our existence in this world, the first practice of yoga is asana, postures.

Managing the interactive mind

Then we begin to work with the mind, to manage our thoughts, desires, inner weaknesses and inner strengths. Desires, thoughts, ideas, aspirations, feelings and emotions are all individual experiences and expressions of the individual mind according to the environment. But the nature of the mind is different to the projection of thoughts, emotions and desires.

Yoga has defined three types of natures, which reflect different states of mind, perception and expression. A glass of water can be perceived as half full or half empty, depending on the state of mind. The three natures defined in yoga are *tamas*, the conditioned mind, *rajas*, the aggressive mind, and *sattva*, the balanced mind. The conditioned or tamasic mind is like a sheet of paper totally covered in writing so that nothing more can be written on it. You live that conditioning for the duration of your life.

The second nature is the aggressive or rajasic mind in which a person's needs, expectations, ego and so on become the centre of their life. We all have this type of mind, because we are only aware of ourselves, and whatever we do is to fulfil our needs. If we love somebody, it is a result of our need. If we hate somebody, it is an expression of a feeling coming from within. The experiences are contained inside and the aggressive nature of the mind relates to those experiences by making oneself the centre of that experience.

In 1974, I was travelling from Bogota to Guatemala and the plane was diverted to Panama. The airport authorities began checking each passenger individually. I simply sat down and watched the other passengers, who were nervous and anxious, although they had all been cleared by the authorities. Why were they so nervous? When the aggressive mind does not find a sense of fulfilment and achievement, it goes wild. There is a swing from aggression to depression, then to aggression and another swing into depression. It

is a common experience in our daily life. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction, like and dislike, an upswing in our desires and a downswing when they are not fulfilled. When this happens, the mental faculties become clouded. When one is nervous, mental clarity has gone. When one is totally self-centred, inner wisdom has gone and then comes confusion, mental conflict and the destruction of peace and happiness.

The third type of mind is the balanced or sattvic mind, in which one is the experiencer and observer of events that happen outside and inside. In this state of mind, one becomes the guide of the mental forces and does not remain subject to their influences. Yogic mind management is attaining this point of balance by shifting the perceptions from the conditioned and aggressive nature to balance. Then peace, happiness and creativity are experienced.

In the yogic system there is a sequence of mental training, which begins with self-observation. First you become aware of the normal expressions of the mind, the normal mental behaviour. Are you aware of what you are thinking now? Are you aware of your feelings? Are you aware of your desires? They continue to exist, but at this moment you are not aware of them because you are focusing on what I am saying. This means that when the mind is focused, you are not aware of the peripheral behaviour and activities in the form of emotions, thoughts, desires, ego, arrogance, anxiety, stress, etc. But when the mind is dissipated, then all these factors suddenly affect the natural state of the mind.

The main theme of the mental aspect of yoga is to come to a state of relaxation and concentration where you are able to filter the unnecessary influences from outside and from within, and to achieve a point of focus and balance. Once you are able to manage the interactive mind, you move into the realm of consciousness and there the spiritual component of yoga begins.

Role of consciousness

The spiritual component of yoga is your understanding and realization of the creative energy within you. It is very difficult

to describe consciousness. Nobody has been able to do so. There is a broad understanding of consciousness as conscious, subconscious, unconscious and beyond unconscious, the transcendental self.

In order to understand consciousness, look at the ocean. If you dive into the ocean, at first there is enough light to see everything clearly, but as you go deeper the light diminishes so that only movements, shapes and shadows can be seen. If you go deeper, there is absolute darkness and you cannot see anything. In the ocean there is no line demarcating the gradations of light and darkness. Light is the conscious mind, dim light is the subconscious mind and darkness is the unconscious mind. It is only a feeling or perception of light that allows us to know which depth we are at. Consciousness has to be treated in the same manner. There is no such thing as conscious, subconscious and unconscious; rather it is our perception of the different levels of the mind according to our awareness.

Awareness is the light which helps us to realize, interact and see things as they are. For example, we are all sitting here wearing different coloured clothes, but if the light goes off, we will be unable to see the colours in the dark. The colours continue to exist, but in the absence of light they cannot be seen. It is the same with awareness. As long as there is awareness, we are able to perceive ourselves and the world, but without awareness we continue to exist without this knowledge. So, when you think of consciousness and illumination of consciousness, you can understand that it is the awareness which is now filtering into the dormant and dark areas of consciousness. The stronger the light and awareness become, the more the darkness decreases. That is what happens in the meditative systems of yoga.

While meditating a person had a vision of a childhood trauma which later became the cause of his asthma. The moment he was able to realize that, the asthma disappeared. If he had never confronted his childhood trauma, today he would still be using bronchodilators and medication. This example indicates that the experience is there, but not the

awareness. This traumatic experience was in his subconscious mind and he was not able to release it, and it was manifesting in the weakest organ of his body. But when in meditation he was able to extend his awareness into the subconscious and bring out and become aware of that trauma, it no longer had a hold over him. This is an indication of how the development of awareness can illuminate the other dimensions of our mind and balance them out by removing the factors which disturb the mind.

Therefore, consciousness has to be treated along with the mind, not separately. If we are able to manage our mind, then we are able to develop our consciousness so that the creativity of life comes forth in all its glory. What we need today in our lives is not peace, but creativity. Peace can be a desire, but our necessity is to learn how to manage our mind and our life. Yoga provides us with the means and understanding to do that. Therefore, give yoga a chance in your life.

Yoga and Mind Management

Jorge Tadeo University, Bogotá, May 19, 2005

Greetings from the land of the Himalayas to the people of the Andes. The mountain range running across Asia into America is not only a geophysical connection, but also represents a more universal and spiritual connection. There is definitely a link between India and Colombia at the spiritual level. Evidence shows that a culture once existed here based on yogic philosophy. This philosophy relates to the expansion of human consciousness and the liberation of energies and potentials. How to achieve this awakening or experience was the original quest of humanity.

We take birth in this body, but what is our experience of life? How do we understand life and how can we improve the quality of our life? Many people have defined the experiences of life as consciousness and energy interacting with the world of objects and senses. People have tried to define consciousness, to define the mind, and how the senses, desires and ideas influence our personality. However, let us look at it from a different angle. The life that we experience today is an expression of our own mind. We live according to the mandates of our mind. The philosophies we live and accept today are ideas embedded in our mind. If you are happy with your life, you have a happier mind. If you are suffering, it reflects the predominant nature of the mind at that time. The pain and pleasure or ignorance and wisdom that we experience are all expressions of the human mind. According to the principles of yoga, the mind has

to be managed so that it becomes more creative, dynamic, vibrant and awakened.

The classical description of yoga is as a method of mind management. Many people have defined yoga as union between the individual consciousness and the higher consciousness. Many people have experienced yoga in the form of physical exercises, which give an experience of completeness and wellbeing. Many people have practised meditation and discovered that they are able to manage their mental problems, phobias, complexes and inhibitions in a better way and come to a better understanding of their nature.

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, which are the authoritative classical text on yoga, define yoga in three specific statements. Five thousand years ago, the rishi Patanjali was asked, "What is yoga?" He answered, "Yoga is nothing but self-discipline." He was then asked, "What is the final outcome of this discipline?" He said, "Through yogic discipline, it is possible to manage the different conditions of the mind which limit our capacities." And the result? "Then you realize your true nature."

Influence of strengths and weaknesses

Human beings have different predominant natures which alter the normal behavioural patterns of the mind. From the yogic perspective, the personality is governed by certain inherent qualities and strengths. The strengths are recognized as clarity of mind, willpower, awareness, concentration and understanding, and also as the application of wisdom, positivity and optimism. Strength of mind is discrimination, knowing the difference between right and wrong. Positive and creative behaviour and attitudes reflect the natural strength of the personality and mind.

The other aspect concerns the weaknesses, which control our mind more than the strengths. These weaknesses are fear, insecurity, inhibitions, clouded thinking, inappropriate behaviour, misunderstandings, self-centredness and ignorance. Normally, we are under the influence of the weaknesses and we lose contact with our inner strengths. Fears, insecurities

and complexes manifest more often than optimistic and creative qualities.

Our behaviour is influenced by these weaknesses. The weaker the person, the more selfish they are. The stronger they are, the more selfless they are. If you are insecure, you try to create a different self-image as a strong and optimistic person. The more you try to hold on to that identity to ensure that it is not disturbed by outside influences, the more self-centred and selfish you become. But if you are positive, optimistic, dynamic and creative, you have nothing to worry about. You are not the centre of your world, but only a participant in the greater picture of life. Then you become more selfless as you are not holding on to a self-image. Selflessness means that you are better able to understand and appreciate the suffering, needs and aspirations of other people in order to help them achieve wholeness. Nature is selfless. Trees do not eat their own fruit and rivers do not drink their own water; it is for those who are hungry or thirsty. Even animals do not live with the same self-centred awareness as human beings.

Managing ambitions and needs

Ambition is another important component. What are our ambitions and our needs? Is the role of ambition only to fulfil our needs and to give a sense of satisfaction and happiness? There are practical and impractical ambitions. Practical ambitions are based on our needs and the drive to achieve them. Impractical ambitions are based on our drive to become more powerful, a power game within ourselves. There are also needs alongside ambitions, but we are not able to distinguish between need and ambition. On the one side, we have strengths and weaknesses and on the other side, ambitions and needs. On the one side, the weakness becomes predominant and we are not aware of our strengths. We become confused and do not know what to do or how to manage situations. On the other side, ambitions become predominant and we ignore many of our needs.

If you look at yourself objectively, you will find that your fears and insecurities represent your weaknesses, and your

desire to become something in life represents your ambition. If you look at society, you will find that hospitals, doctors, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts all deal with those areas of life where we have lost control. A good psychiatrist or a psychoanalyst will help us to connect with our strength to overcome difficulties, which indicates we have lost contact with our inherent inner strengths, positivity and optimism. We have also lost awareness of our needs, and we are simply chasing a mirage in search of happiness, what the world calls the 'rat race'.

We have to live with this mind and use it to improve the quality of our life. Our discussion is not how to manage our thoughts, emotions, desires or expectations, but rather how to manage the strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs which influence the nature of our personality, and govern the expressions and manifestations of the mind. If one of these four patterns is strong, then our behaviour, thought patterns, emotions, will and expectations will be influenced. This is where yoga comes in with a very clear-cut system of meditation.

Meditation – a state of mind, not a practice

In yoga, meditation, *dhyana*, is the seventh step, not the first. Just as you start primary school in first grade and gradually advance from grade to grade, yoga has to be treated in the same manner. You have to start in the first class, not jump into the seventh class and bypass the other steps. However, many people are so keen to practise meditation that they want to jump into the seventh class. They practise a concentration or meditation technique, and while their practice is satisfactory, they are still caught up in the same conflicting mental patterns as before.

From the yogic perspective, meditation cannot be taught or practised. It is only a state of experience and a state of mind. When you go to sleep at night, you are not aware of yourself or that you are sleeping. There is total disassociation between you, time, space and object. When you get up, you are again aware of yourself, your personality, your environment and your world. Just as sleep or waking is a state of

mind, in the same way meditation is a state of mind. So meditation cannot be practised. We have to retrain and re-educate our personality and mind. The process of developing the meditative state begins with awareness and moves into the area of concentration.

Relaxation

In yoga, the sequence to realize the different natures of the mind is *pratyahara*, relaxation and developing awareness, followed by *dharana*, concentration. Pratyahara is the beginning of an internalized understanding of our nature. Pratyahara practices begin with relaxation. Normally, we are in a state of psychological tension, imperceptible to the conscious mind. The conscious mind, the mind interacting with the world, is only aware of those areas which are predominantly in the scope of its awareness. Right now, there are different people, sounds and movements in this room, but you are focused on the lecture and therefore are not aware of other peripheral experiences. If you record a soundtrack in a recording studio, you then use a computer to filter out the background noise and modify the quality of the sound so it is clear.

Similarly, in pratyahara, in the first stage of relaxation, you become aware of yourself and filter out the background stuff that has clouded your perception. Then you are able to release the psychological and unconscious tensions that have affected your creativity. People who have practised relaxation and awareness suddenly become different in their attitudes, thinking process and approach to life. With relaxation, we start by developing awareness and move to an understanding of different situations. This is the first practice that needs to be perfected before going on to the second class, which is concentration.

Concentration

Concentration, *dharana*, means focusing the mental processes and energies. It also means total identification. There is the story of a teacher who decided to test his students' ability in

archery. He placed a clay bird on the branch of a tree, then he called his students, one by one, and asked them to pick up a bow and arrow and aim at the eye of the bird. When a student was ready to shoot his arrow, the teacher would ask him what he could see. The student would naturally say, "I can see you. I can see the world. I can see the tree, the branch, the leaves, the fruits, the flowers, the sky and the clouds." These students failed the test. However, one student, when asked what he could see, replied, "I see nothing but the eye of the bird which I have to hit." He passed the test. Put yourself in the same position. If you see everything, it represents a dissipated state of mind that is unable to focus on its target. The student who saw only the eye of the bird logically must see everything, just like his classmates, but his concentration was centred on only one thing. That is the state of concentration.

If you attain this state of concentration, you will experience absolute peace anywhere, even in the middle of the market. Otherwise you will never attain peace even in a remote corner of the mountains. Swami Satyananda has said that there is no peace in the Himalayas and there is no noise in the world. Wherever you are, peace is within you and in the expression of your mind. Classical yoga deals with relaxation and concentration in the form of pratyahara and dharana. This re-education of the mind which is performed in a meditative state can occur spontaneously, without effort, in the course of time. Meditation allows one to become oneself once again.

Life is an expression of the mind

The purpose of meditation is to attain the state of balance where you are able to manage the modifications of your mind which manifest as overenthusiasm or lack of enthusiasm, overconfidence or lack of confidence. To do so, you have to follow the sequence defined in yoga, and not jump to seventh class. If you follow the sequence of self-observation and self-awareness properly, you will be able to understand your involvement and interaction in the world of sense objects. If you are able to connect with your strengths and transcend your weaknesses, and understand the difference between your

ambitions and needs, then you will be able to improve the quality of your mind and thus of your life. This is the classical, traditional teaching of yoga handed down from generation to generation via enlightened beings or masters. Life is an expression of the mind. If we can convert the quality of our mind to positivity, creativity and optimism, then the entire experience of life also changes. Yoga gives that spark of inspiration. Use the spark of yoga to illuminate your mind, to brighten your life and be creative, happy and joyous.

Yoga and Personality Integration

Cartagena de Indias Convention Centre, May 27, 2005

If you look at a map of South America, the Andes mountain range resembles the spinal cord of the continent. Interestingly, when the Andes reaches Colombia, it divides into three ranges, representing the three nadis: ida, pingala and sushumna. *Ida* represents the inner force located on the left, *pingala* represents the solar force on the right, and *sushumna* represents the balanced flow in the centre. In order for kundalini to awaken, the primal energy has to be awakened, and it is important that these three energy flows are activated and balanced.

In the past yoga had an intimate connection with the pre-Columbian civilization. Statues in archaeological parks and museums in Colombia depict traditional yogic concepts and practices. Until the seventh century AD Colombia had a vibrant spiritual culture, but then came a period of decline and spirituality entered the dark ages. After many centuries the energy of yoga is again becoming vibrant here. This understanding and energy needs to be tapped by the people of this country, who should again connect with the spiritual values which once guided their forefathers. These spiritual values were free from ideological beliefs and traditions. They represented the search for positivity and creativity within, which is the aim of yoga. The aim of our yoga practice has to be to discover the positive, creative self, not self-realization, not God-realization, not *moksha* or liberation.

Although many people in the West and East see yoga as a physical culture, classical yoga is defined as the attainment

of mental quietness. Discovering quietness of the mind is the result of a process you put yourself through to filter out the causes of stress, tension and anxiety. Working with the mind is the central theme of the yoga practices. Therefore, you may do physical exercises involving stretching, bending and twisting, but these relaxing physical activities only represent an introduction to the process of yoga. If you start yoga by practising simple movements like pawanmuktasana, you will be considered to be in the first class of yoga. If you gain the ability to sit in a meditative posture for three hours and to practise the headstand for half an hour continuously, you will still be in the first class, because your consciousness is still stuck in the body.

Awareness starts with the mind

According to classical yoga, we begin to practise and live yoga the moment we try to access the mind. The entire process of working with the mind develops with awareness. In darkness we do not see things as they really are. To a child the branches of a tree can look like a witch. An adult can see a rope lying on the road as a snake. These misunderstandings happen in the absence of knowledge, in the absence of light or in the absence of awareness. However, if we are able to shine our torch and illuminate our own path, then confusion will not occur and we will be able to perceive reality and the world as they really are, in the light of our awareness.

The first requirement of yoga is to cultivate and develop awareness, which is an attitude and conditioning of the mind. Distraction and dissipation are the opposite of awareness. If one is aware, one is not distracted. For example, if the light from your torch only illuminates a circumference of three feet, that is all you will see, but if you turn on a floodlight, a larger area will be illuminated and you can have a broader vision. You can see more of the world. This is an example of awareness, which begins with focusing or becoming aware of one little thing and gradually developing it, so that it becomes a floodlight instead of a torchlight.

Concentration comes after awareness

Once awareness is cultivated, the component of one-pointedness or concentration needs to be achieved. The final achievement one can have in the process of yoga is becoming one-pointed. Concentration focuses the energies of the personality. The thoughts and ideas become powerful, life projects power. This power is *sattva*, purity of the self, which is reflected in thinking, behaviour, attitude and lifestyle. This attitude and experience of inner purity leads to a meditative state of mind. Therefore, according to yogic theories, meditation cannot be practised, but rather is to be cultivated and awakened.

Patanjali's raja yoga can be practised only up to the sixth stage of dharana or concentration; the seventh and eighth stages, dhyana and samadhi, have to be experienced. Therefore, meditation is a state of mind, not a technique or a practice. It is a state of consciousness in which there are no distractions and dissipations but total focus and one-pointedness. The entire theory of yoga is based on perfecting the meditative state, beginning with the cultivation of awareness and then the cultivation of concentration.

Attitudinal change comes before meditation

In order to bring about a positive and transformative change in your personality and mentality, to create balance and harmony between the functions of the head or intellect, the heart or emotions and the hands or performance, in the initial stages of yoga you have to put yourself through a process of attitudinal change. Here we see a new spectrum of yoga. In the beginning, yoga is for bringing about attitudinal change, then for working with the physical and mental energies, and then for managing and altering the limiting perceptions of the mind. This represents Patanjali's first six stages.

The first two stages: *yama*, self-restraints, and *niyama*, personal disciplines, represent attitudinal transformation; the third and fourth stages: *asana*, physical postures, and *pranayama*, breathing techniques, represent working with the energies of the body and mind; the fifth and sixth stages: *pratyahara*, relaxation and sensory withdrawal, and *dharana*,

concentration, represent the effort to still and quieten the mind by developing awareness and concentration; and the seventh and eighth stages: *dhyana*, meditation, and *samadhi*, the culmination of meditation, represent the mental states that can be achieved by perfecting the initial stages. This is the system of classical yoga that we need to understand, practise and incorporate in our lives.

Therefore, in order to experience and live yoga, it is necessary to include one yama and one niyama in your life, along with the practice of asana and pranayama, pratyahara or dharana that you do in a class or at home. Asana, pranayama, relaxation and concentration represent your physical efforts to attain physical, mental and energetic wellbeing. The attempt to live one yama and one niyama of your choice represents your effort at attitudinal transformation. Once attitudinal transformation takes place, the meditative state or meditation can begin easily.

Transforming attitudes with yama and niyama

The yamas are *ahimsa*, non-violence, *satya*, truth, *asteya*, non-stealing, *brahmacharya*, continence, and *aparigraha*, non-covetousness. If you take up a yama such as ahimsa, you are able to modify the causes of aggression, violence, assertiveness and arrogance in your nature. You are able to manage the negativity and the self-centred perceptions in a better way. You are able to manage your personality so it is relaxed and joyous, without any insecurity or fear clouding your behaviour or attitudes. Living ahimsa can also become a practice of concentration and meditation. When you go to bed at night, observe the relationships and interactions that you had during the day and see them in your mind like a film, an interchange of ideas, thoughts and verbal communication, whether they have been constructive or negative. You could observe your reactions and understanding of the situation over a period of time in order to perfect the attitude of ahimsa, being free from aggression or negativity.

Or you can take up the next yama, *satya*, adherence to truth, to improve your self-understanding and your relation-

ships with other people. It is a very valuable component to experiment with, and it can also be achieved and attained in a meditative, concentrated state. You can analyze your own masks of truthfulness and falsity in the light of your ambitions, desires and needs. In this manner, if you are able to live one yama per year and go as far as you can, maybe one percent or ten percent, you can definitely walk as far as possible for that transformation to happen within yourself.

In the same manner, you can live one niyama as well. The niyamas are *shaucha*, purity, *santosha*, contentment, *tapas*, austerity, *swadhyaya*, self-understanding and self-knowledge, and *Ishwara pranidhana*, development of faith and trust. These are also important disciplines which need to be achieved in life. There are two niyamas I would prescribe: one is *santosha*, contentment, and the second is *Ishwara pranidhana*, having trust and faith in oneself and in God. Together they become a very powerful tool for achieving anything in life. The search for happiness lies in contentment, and the experience of wholeness and completeness also lies in contentment. So, whatever you do, be happy that you have had the opportunity to do it. If you have loved somebody, be happy and content that love grew in your heart, whether it was returned or not. In this way, you can be happy for all the good things that life has given you. If you are able to see the beauty of life, then there is no cause for discontentment.

When you begin to experience full contentment, this leads to the development of trust and faith in yourself, in your own efforts and also in divine grace. There has to be a beautiful balance between one's efforts and divine grace. Total dependence on divine grace does not exist and total dependence on one's own efforts also does not exist. One's own efforts and destiny have to come together in order to create life. A mango does not change its destiny to become a banana. A mango is a mango, a banana is a banana, a potato is a potato, a tomato is a tomato – that is the destiny of that particular *jiva* or life form.

We are not here in the dark without a destiny to follow. Just as the destiny of a mango seed is to become another fruit and

another seed with the same potential for regeneration, the destiny of a human being is to again become a human being by connecting with true humanness. This is the aim of yoga, realizing your own real nature. From the yogic perspective, life is a process of meditation, a meditative experience of a very pleasant, inner, subtle change and transformation that makes you rich, happy and peaceful. Therefore, give yoga a chance to evolve and take root in your life.

Greece

2005

Yoga: Balance and Harmony

Satyanandashram Hellas, 4–5 June



Yogic Lifestyle

We are meeting in the spirit of yoga and in the spirit of love. If you did not feel love and if you were not connected to yoga, you would not be here. We are also reminded today of the Greek heritage, culture and civilization that has given light and wisdom to humanity in the past. The Greek culture has seen great human achievements as well as great human tragedies. The Greek civilization has experienced happiness, beauty and joy as well as the power of being an empire. It has also experienced the sorrow and pain of isolation. It has been an example of human effort, which led either to tragedy or to accomplishment. The Greek civilization has lived with the paradox of either adhering to the philosophies of the material world, or accepting the realities of the spiritual world. It is in this cultural environment that, today, we are focusing on something close to our hearts and aspirations – the philosophy and systems of yoga.

You will have experienced the energy and magic of the ashram, which exists because yoga is practised here. Yoga is a very systematic and scientific method of transformation, more powerful than any magic. However, in order to experience this magic and a transformation in your life, you need to immerse yourself completely in yoga. More than a philosophy or a system of thought or practices, yoga is a lifestyle. It is a vision of life that is lived, an aspiration that is achieved, an attitude that broadens our perception and a reality of life that makes us aware of a greater unifying force around us.

Inner change requires effort

This is not spiritual or religious dogma, but the possibilities of human achievement. Human beings have been given the necessary tools to attain the highest goals in life. According to the world's spiritual traditions, the highest goal is the ability to experience oneness with everything. Realizing oneness is not a mystical or an abstract spiritual process, but a practical reality. The aspiration to achieve oneness with the consciousness around us necessitates great effort to overcome our human limitations. It goes without saying that change or transformation cannot be achieved without effort. The culmination of that effort represents a process of maturation. Just as a child makes an effort to learn at school and university and gain success through maturing of intelligence, emotions, attitudes, ideas and beliefs and competence in skills and abilities, similarly, the mind, body and consciousness are put through a process to enable us to transform the basic qualities of our lives. Yoga represents a process of reconnection with the body, mind and spirit.

We exist in this body, but we are not connected to it. We use our mental faculties to believe that we govern our mind, but in reality we are subject to our ambitions and greedy desires. We strive with great effort to experience our inner spiritual nature, but we are unable to come to terms with our own mind and mental expressions. Therefore, in order to find contentment, peace and happiness, we must search inside ourselves, not outside. However, the more we search on the outside, the more disturbed our mind becomes. The world's spiritual traditions teach that we have to look inside to find our own stability.

It is like trying to balance a set of scales. Because of our drive to experience happiness externally and our inability to reconnect with ourselves internally, one side of the scales is always heavier than the other. We are unable to bring about a balance because we are still caught in the negative pull of the material world. Although our aspirations may become spiritual, we are unable to experience the purity of the inner state as long as our mind remains subject to the gravity of the tamasic, negative, material nature.

In this situation we strive to become good by suppressing our negative qualities. In the beginning this is possible because our will and aspirations are stronger than the negative and tamasic content of life. Our motivation is high and our aspirations have a freshness to them. However, when we do something for a long time, we become bored because our mind becomes conditioned to it. Then the mind again looks for something new and exciting. So the effort to achieve what we had hoped to achieve is now reduced and eventually it disappears. As soon as the inspiration is lost, what was initially suppressed comes to the surface again in the garb of newness. We then begin to question whether we have wasted time in pursuing something internal, as we have not achieved it as quickly as we had hoped.

Continuity, regularity and faith

Yoga recognizes this problem and offers a solution. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (1:14) states that in order to become established in effort, three qualities need to be cultivated: continuity, regularity and faith. Continuity is the effort to do something for a long time without getting bored, with focus, awareness and a connection to the inspiration that has guided you. The second quality is regularity, which means that if you decide to do something, you do it. It becomes a habit, a part of your life, something that is important for you to experience life fully. It is part of your survival strategy.

We breathe continuously without effort, our heart beats and our senses operate continuously without effort. These are spontaneous functions and happen effortlessly. However, in the beginning the things we need to change require effort. The effort has to become spontaneous, and for this there has to be continuity. It does not mean accelerating and braking, accelerating and braking, but maintaining one constant speed, if you can. In this way, you will go further. Continuity transforms effort into spontaneity.

The third quality is faith. Faith is having conviction, respect and the knowledge that your effort is appropriate. The way leading to the culmination of effort is an important subject in

yoga. Faith, respect and understanding are necessary because without them there will be no empathy with what you are trying to achieve, no appreciation of the experience. In yoga, regularity, continuity and faith constitute sadhana.

If you adhere to these three principles, you will see a new dimension of yoga emerge before you. You begin to realize your nature and the transformation that is taking place spontaneously and effortlessly as you practise yoga. Yoga practice may begin in a classroom environment or a yoga centre with asanas and the hatha yoga cleansing techniques, but yogic lifestyle begins in a different way. Yogic lifestyle constitutes the principles that enable you to live yoga. To live yoga requires regularity, continuity, faith and respect.

Cultivating awareness through meditation

When you live yoga, you begin with fine-tuning the mind, which is the outward extension and projection of the transcendental consciousness. The way to harmonize and reorganize the mind, the external faculty of consciousness, begins with meditation. Meditation is a process of rebalancing the mind from zero to one hundred. In this process you make the effort to cultivate your awareness. After that, there is an effort to gain control over the senses. Then there is withdrawal of the senses from external objects to an internal experience or state. The process of developing and then withdrawing awareness leads to the state of concentration. An effort is then made to extend the period of concentration, which initially is fragmented. As your effort becomes more one-pointed and as you are able to extend the span of concentration, inner dissipation stops. This entire range of experiences is known as meditation.

To achieve this experience of the meditative state, you have to begin by developing awareness, not only in the outer, sensorial and expressive mental field, but also in the personality. The ultimate is not control of the senses or redirecting the energies of the senses, but being able to fine-tune the different traits of the personality. Yoga defines these traits as positive and negative. The positive ones are

virtues or uplifting qualities and the negative ones are vices or destructive qualities. In order to cultivate awareness and live a yogic lifestyle, an attempt has to be made to discover the positive and negative traits of one's personality. This experience needs to be analyzed objectively.

In the beginning, just strive to identify your positive qualities or strengths and your limitations or weaknesses. Don't try to justify any quality, state or attitude. Negative is negative and positive is positive. If you try to justify something, you are only justifying the existence of the negative force in you and accepting it. In reality, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses is the first step in the meditative process after perfecting or going through pratyahara and dharana. In the initial stages of pratyahara and dharana, by developing concentration, redirecting the senses and achieving awareness, one is guided to redirect the energy of the senses and the interactive mind.

Fine-tuning the attitudes

By analyzing and observing your qualities and limitations, strengths and weaknesses, you are bringing your inner nature into the conscious field. You are learning how to bring about a balance in your outer experiences and interactions and your inner nature and personality. So analyze your strengths and weaknesses, and make an effort to cultivate the strengths which transform the weaknesses. If there is hatred, make an effort to cultivate love, the opposite trait. If there is selfishness, try to become selfless. If there is animosity, try to cultivate friendship and focus on that. Remember that instead of removing things from the heavier side of the scales, you can bring about a balance by making the lighter side heavier. If you focus only on removing and lightening the negative side, you will be ignoring the positive side. If you identify with the positive side, then there is self-acceptance, not self-denial, and this leads to creativity as you make an effort to transform a good quality into a better one.

Your effort, which normally in a limited, confined extroverted state of mind leads to tragedies, will now lead you to

inner heroic achievements. In this way, you will be able to experience the yogic lifestyle, not just the yoga practices. This will be the beginning of the transformation of your nature, personality and mind, not the ability to meditate for three hours without moving the body. We believe that one moment of total identification and peace can become an eternal moment or experience, that one moment of joy can become an eternal moment of joy. If you can accept the beauty of that experience growing in you, you are living yoga.

Take the example of love. When you love somebody one hundred percent, you expect that much love in return. That is our life: expecting and giving. When expectations become too difficult to handle, they become big problems. When giving becomes one-sided, that also becomes a problem. When expectations are not fulfilled, there is a sense of rejection, which is self-induced. Why can't we accept the beauty of love that grows in our heart regardless of whether it comes back? If we can appreciate that connection of love growing in our heart, we will become yogis. If we have expectations, we remain bhogis. The attitude, awareness and understanding have to change. If we can change our perception and vision of ourselves, we will grow in wisdom.

A problem does not exist without a cause. If we can stop identifying with the problem and discover the cause, we will also find the solution. A change in attitude is needed. Re-tuning our attitudes helps us to evolve, transform and achieve, not practising the headstand and other complicated postures. Do them with regularity and conviction, but also focus on cultivating strengths by readjusting and refocusing the mental perceptions. In order to live a yogic life and experience the awareness that leads to balance and harmony, we need to recognize our strengths and weaknesses, and cultivate additional strengths. This is the beginning of the realization of yoga.

The Common Roots of India and Greece

There is an interesting comparison between the philosophy of Plato and the philosophy conveyed in the Upanishads. In Plato's lifetime, the civilian mentality was not ready to accept spiritual experiences, realities or concepts. Therefore, Plato's thoughts are cryptic and contain hidden meanings. However, the ideas conveyed in his teachings are the eternal truth. What is that eternal truth? How does each one of us experience it?

The Vedas are the revelations of enlightened beings. The Upanishads are the product of much analysis of the human nature and mind. Can you create the taste of chocolate in your mouth and retain it for a few minutes, hours, days or weeks? You can imagine what the taste is like, but to have the actual experience you need to put chocolate in your mouth. Chocolate is not a natural substance; it is created by combining and processing various ingredients. So when you eat the chocolate, the sweetness is a revelation, but that revelation is preceded by an effort to collect the right ingredients and make the chocolate. Discovering the right ingredients and the revelation is based on understanding, logic and knowledge.

The Vedas represent revelations about the taste of chocolate and the Upanishads represent the effort to collect the different ingredients that culminate in the taste of chocolate. The Upanishads convey many different thoughts. Some are monistic in nature and others are dualistic. There is a collection of Upanishads known as the *Vedanta Upanishads*, which contain the philosophy of superconsciousness. Although

we are limited and contained in a body with five senses, there is the possibility of experiencing a higher reality. The human mind is like a container filled with water. When it is made crystal clear, the mind reflects the image and warmth of the sun. It does not become the sun, but it can become filled with the luminosity of the sun. That is how the *Vedanta Upanishads* see each individual, as a receptacle filled with water. When the sun shines, thousands of suns are seen in thousands of receptacles, and thousands of receptacles are filled with the luminosity of the sun.

However, we are not able to experience the sun because there is a huge black cloud over it and in front of it, which is known as *maya* or illusion. The black cloud is the impermanent or transitory nature. It has to be removed before the sun can shine on our receptacle. With the removal of the cloud the sparkle of divinity can be seen. The way to remove the cloud is through self-awareness, self-analysis and self-effort, which lead to self-transcendence. This is the path of jnana yoga. First, be aware. Second, know, analyze and assess what is appropriate. Third, make the right effort to speak and act appropriately. If you do everything appropriately, then the mind becomes the vehicle to give you the experience of transcendence.

In order to practise jnana yoga, begin by knowing your strengths and weaknesses. Focus on increasing the weight of the positive qualities so that the lighter side of your life becomes heavier. Then maybe you will be able to experience the platonic mind.

Guru-disciple relationship

There are parallels between the guru-disciple relationship that existed in ancient Greece and in the vedic tradition. The guru-disciple relationship is an ancient tradition. However, it is also a most misunderstood one, because we tend to think of the guru from our limited perspective. Whenever we enter into a relationship with the guru, it is to fulfil our expectations and needs, which gives birth to further fears, desires and expectations. The disciple begins to think, “If I

have a problem, what will happen if my guru gets angry with me, leaves me or does not guide me?” This creates further insecurities and complexes within the disciple. Because our relationship with the guru is very selfish, emotional, physical and social dependencies develop, which are anti-spiritual. For this reason the guru-disciple relationship is much misunderstood today. If we look within, we will understand that we have not even begun to grasp the meaning of this relationship in our lives.

The first quality needed to develop this intricate inner connection with the guru is the ability to become empty. If you want to fill up a space, you have to empty it first. You cannot pour more water into a full bottle. You have to empty the container in order to fill it. It is no use saying that you will surrender. You have to realize and live this surrender. Krishna’s flute was very dear to him. When he was asked why he loved his flute so much, he gave a very simple answer: “I love the flute because it is empty inside and I can create any melody that I choose.”

The prayer: “Make me an instrument of thy peace” is similar. An instrument cannot play itself; only the player can create melodies on the instrument. Therefore, the first requirement of spiritual life and of the guru-disciple relationship is to make ourselves empty. Then the guru becomes an inspiration. I have experienced that inspiration. I experience my guru in me in the form of inspiration. Swami Satyananda also experiences his guru in the form of an inspiration. There is no dependence and no attachment. There is reverence, faith, trust, love and oneness. Therefore, being empty is the first requirement. The second requirement is to expand the horizons of wisdom by becoming aware and realizing that nothing is final in this life. This is the beginning of spiritual education.

It is like the example of the Upanishads and the Vedas. The Upanishads represent a collection of thoughts. Some are absolute, some are divisive, some are monistic and some are dualistic. The Vedas represent the final revelation of these concepts and their transformation into experience.

However, even in the end the Vedas say, *Neti, neti, neti*: 'Not this, not this, not this.' This phrase means that even the revelations are not absolute; they are the culmination of an idea or a chain of thoughts. They are identified as one revelation, or as one concept. However, what is continuous and permanent is the spiritual or divine potential in our life. The cultivation of awareness develops the human mind and allows transcendence of the external nature. The idea of being empty and developing awareness was also conveyed by Socrates. The guru-disciple relationship uplifts one spiritually to experience luminosity within. The connection with the guru represents the continuous drive to achieve proficiency in life, rather than perfection. The experience of proficiency indicates continuity of spirit.

Although many traditions and beliefs do not accept reincarnation, vedic philosophy and culture does. Reincarnation is the spirit or consciousness becoming self-aware at different stages of existence and evolution. It is reincarnation which has made consciousness aware of itself. A seed reincarnates and evolves into another seed. Each reincarnation represents continuity of the potential inherent in the seed. You eat a mango and plant the seed, which grows into a tree and produces fruit containing many seeds. The first mango that you ate died, but the potential continued, and manifested in the second, third and subsequent fruits. The potential of the seed that was destroyed is now contained in all the mangoes.

Consciousness continues to evolve in the same way. When a body dies, it does not return to the same body, in the same space, time, situation or circumstance. But the potential of the spirit or consciousness continues to exist in different dimensions, and when the time is ripe, the same potential manifests again in a new body. Even if you die on this planet and go to heaven, you will still be an incarnated being in heaven. Even if you go to hell, you will be an incarnated being in hell. No matter where you go, you are in a different incarnation, in a different life and in a different experience which is continuously evolving. This is only a play, a *lila*, in

the omnipotence of divinity. Each time you experience the same potentiality of the omnipotent.

Tantra

The teachings of Pythagoras have much in common with tantra. Myths, mysteries and initiations are the three components of tantric meditation and the tantric way of life.

The Shaivite tradition, which is an offshoot of tantra, and whose followers worship Shiva, has the following myth. In South India there is a mountain called Arunachala. One day, on top of the mountain, Brahma, the creator, and Vishnu, the preserver and sustainer of life, had an argument about which one was the greatest god. While they were having this great dispute, a pillar of fire suddenly appeared between them, extending upwards to the heavens and downwards to the underworld.

Both gods wondered what it could be and decided to investigate. Vishnu took the form of a boar and dug underground to find the base of the pillar. Brahma took the form of a swan and flew upwards into the heavens to find the top end. They were flying and digging into infinity, as the pillar of fire extended from infinity to infinity. Eventually, Brahma became tired of flying and decided to cheat. He picked up a flower from infinity and flew down. According to Hindu mythology, at that time Brahma had five heads, representing the five attributes of nature, the five senses and the five elements, without which one cannot create anything. Therefore, the symbolic representation of the creator is as a person with five heads.

As Brahma returned to earth with the flower, he looked down at the crater which Vishnu, as a boar, had dug. He called Vishnu, who ascended, covered in dust and muck from the underground. Brahma said to Vishnu, "Look, I have found the other end of the pillar of fire, and here is a flower to prove it." The moment Brahma told this lie there was a burst of thunder from the pillar, and a type of flame rose up and cut off one of Brahma's heads. According to the myth, the pillar of fire said, "Both of you are wrong. Nobody can scale the extremes of the

pillar, because I am infinite. I am omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, without a beginning or an end. Extremities only exist when there is a beginning and an end.”

The mystery or message within this myth is to understand the teaching in your own life. Vishnu, who represents the force of existence, sustenance and preservation, takes the form of a boar and descends into the earth. The earth element sustains and nourishes life. But there are many beautiful things hidden inside the earth, minerals, jewels, gold and silver. There is beauty as well as muck, soil and lava. There are things that destroy and cause suffering and others that give pleasure. Both suffering and pleasure, vice and virtue, exist, and when you start digging, you find both. Usually, the vices are in greater quantity than the virtues. Vishnu is the force of sustenance and his energy is both negative and positive at the same time. So you have to dig or search within yourself to discover both the ugliness and the beauty. When you become the knower of both, you become able to nourish your own life, and you will have the meaning of your existence, not just an ambitious expectation that leads you nowhere.

In contrast to Vishnu, Brahma, the creator, takes the form of a swan and flies into the heavens. The symbology is clear. The creator is bound to earth by the force of creation. However, at the same time the possibility exists for the mind to ascend into unknown dimensions. This flight into unknown dimensions opens the door to spiritual and mystical experiences, and realization of those transcendental states. However, when you fly higher and higher through your perceptions, knowledge and wisdom, there is also the growth of a weed, known as arrogance. Ninety-nine percent of all spiritual aspirants are more arrogant than humble, because spiritual attainments feed the ego, self-satisfaction and self-image. It is that arrogant head of the ego that has to be eventually chopped off, like the head of Brahma.

Therefore, innocence is considered to be the quality which allows you entry into the higher dimensions. In order to enter the kingdom of heaven you need to be innocent like a child.

The more arrogant you are, the more sadhana you have to do to become humble, innocent and to allow your head to be cut off. You can be one hundred percent sure that if you do not allow the guru to chop off your head, then destiny will. If you do not allow destiny to chop off your head, then God definitely will.

This is the meaning of the mystery and teachings of this myth. When you understand this mystery, the process outlined during initiation becomes your sadhana, and the method through which you can realize the myth within you. Then the myth becomes a living reality, and you become enlightened. This is the essence of tantric meditation, tantric mythology, tantric mysteries and tantric initiation.

Satsang

In Colombia you spoke about the difference between yoga and mysticism. As I understand it, samadhi corresponds to the mystical tradition we have in Europe. I refer to the Christian tradition and not to new age mysticism. However, if samadhi is an aim of advanced yogis, I do not understand the difference. Can you please clarify this?

It is essential to know the difference between the process of yoga and the mystical experiences we can have after perfecting certain states of yoga. Generally, people are more obsessed with mystical experiences than with trying to improve the quality of their lives. Take the example of the room we are in and the boundaries that surround it. If you want to leave those boundaries, you have to start walking from where you are and move towards the door. The choice of the route you take is yours. While walking there, you can observe where you are, where you are putting your feet and be careful not to trip over people, their bags and other obstacles that may be in the way. If you go through the door, you will see an open and clear space.

Your journey from your seat to the door represents the process of yoga, the effort of yoga and the sadhana of yoga. You have to tread carefully, overcome obstacles, observe yourself and other people, and be aware of the influences and situations you experience while striving to maintain your balance. When you go through the door, you are free to live without any restrictions. However, while undertaking

the journey to the door, you have to tread carefully because of the other people in the room.

Think about this process. If you start projecting yourself outside the door from the beginning, you will stumble and have accidents. You will hurt yourself and may fall and break a bone, or twist your ankle. Anything can happen. So the main concern is not to think about mystical experiences which lie outside the boundaries of where you live, but how to develop awareness so that you can move in this crowded room, which represents the crowded minds full of conditionings, desires, ambitions and personal eccentricities. The first direction of yoga is to manage yourself, manage your mind, your feelings, emotions and instincts and give them a direction and a focus. The result will be your journey into the unknown, the mystical, the spiritual.

One of the biggest problems with the mind is that we project ourselves and see ourselves as we wish to be in the future. We ignore the present moment and what we are currently experiencing. Yoga teaches us to connect with the present without expectations of the future. The future is the outcome of a balanced, harmonious and joyous present. Even samadhi is not a process of mystical experience, but a process of gaining knowledge, control and direction over the faculties of the mind. The word *samadhi* means balanced, harmonious and integrated intelligence, not intellect but intelligence. It means establishing oneself in wisdom and identifying with that universal intelligence. Samadhi is a sadhana or practice you are trying to attain. It is dealing with yourself and trying to achieve a balanced consciousness. After you have achieved this internal harmony, then mystical experiences can and do happen.

You can describe the glory of the sun to a blind person, but the visual impressions, images or fantasies he then creates will be according to his thoughts, conditioning and mentality, and can never be accurate. For an accurate experience the person needs to be able to see with his own eyes. If we think we are having mystical experiences when we are not living in the present and are unable to walk consciously from where we

are now to the boundaries of our life, then we are like the blind person who thinks such images are the truth, In this way, we are failures in the present and we will be failures in the future.

Initially, yoga says that you need to make an effort and practise a system of techniques through which you can become aware of the present and learn to manage it. In this way you gain control over your actions and reactions. When you feel hot, you are not going to quench your thirst just by thinking about a cool drink. The first step towards samadhi is an effort to attain a balanced and integrated intelligence. The second step is the extension and culmination of that effort, when you actually experience the unknown, the mystical and the spiritual. These two steps need to be understood. The first step is overcoming your limitations and moving towards your limits. That is the process of yogic sadhana, yogic effort and yogic practice. When you are able to overcome your limitations and move into the unidentified and inaccessible areas of existence, then what you experience is identified and labelled as mystical. However, they are real events that alter and transform your life.

From this viewpoint you can see that yogic sadhana and yogic life are two different things. Yogic sadhana or practice allows you to move into the experiences of life and to recognize and realize them. Yogic life allows you access to and the ability to interact with the unknown and inaccessible areas of your existence. The sadhana is a yogic practice to attain different states of consciousness. Mystical experiences occur in yogic life. Remember that yogic life is experienced when you are able to fine-tune your own nature. When you are able to witness your mental expressions, when you are able to discriminate between your ambitions and needs and when you are able to connect with your positive self, then yogic life begins.

I travel for work across many time zones. Could you please suggest any practices that could help speed-up my recovery from jetlag?

These days the airlines provide guidelines on how to manage jetlag, which include the practices of pawanmuktasana part

one. These are very beneficial exercises that you can do sitting in your economy or business class seat. When you do the pawanmuktasana one exercises, you are stimulating the nerves and nadis. Activating the nadis will help to harmonize the pranas, remove the blocks from your posture and also allow a free flow of vital energy. There is a sensation of lightness and increased energy when you practise pawanmuktasana after feeling stiff.

Yogic breathing helps a lot with jetlag. Breathing is one of the most important functions of the human body and yet we do not know how to breathe correctly. Usually, we breathe in for two seconds and then out instantly for two seconds or so. The general theory is that if you breathe in for one second, you breathe out for one or two seconds, and that ratio keeps on increasing. So, if you normally make the attempt to breathe in for five seconds, you will breathe out for six. If you breathe in for two seconds, you will breathe out for three, and so on. Expiration is always longer by a second.

If you inhale deeply, you fill the alveoli, the air pockets in the lungs, with more air. However, in a confined environment such as an aeroplane, where the quality of air is low, the level of oxygen entering the alveoli is reduced. This leads to oxygen deprivation in the cells of the body. However, if you are able to raise the level of oxygen in your cells and increase the intake and absorption of oxygen into your blood, it is easier to manage jetlag.

Research has shown that with *pranayama*, breathing techniques, the intake of oxygen and the level of oxygen in the blood remains the same as in normal breathing. However, there is greater assimilation and absorption of oxygen during pranayama than in normal breathing. In slow, deep yogic breathing, we fill up more of the lower area of the lungs with air and hold it there for a longer time before exhalation. Absorption of oxygen happens in a smoother and easier manner without a lot of strain and effort by the body.

Research has also shown that the output of carbon dioxide and toxins from the body doubles when one practises pranayama. If, for example, the normal intake of oxygen

per breath is three milligrams, then even with a pranayama practice of deep, slow and regulated breathing, the intake will still be three milligrams, but there will be less effort from the body to assimilate, absorb and use that oxygen. If the output of carbon dioxide per breath is normally two point four milligrams, then with pranayama it will become four point eight or five milligrams. Pranayama therefore improves our breathing process, not by altering our intake of oxygen, but by more efficiently eliminating gases and toxins from the body. The increase in vitality and in blood oxygen levels will help manage jetlag better.

So to help manage jetlag try pawanmuktasana part one and nadi shodhana pranayama with deep abdominal yogic breathing.

In dreams we don't have access to our senses. Different cultures, such as ancient Greece and Buddhism, have similar views on dreams and their interpretation. Is there a correspondence in yoga, or does yoga conform to the Buddhist saying, "Holy men don't dream?"

Yoga and Buddhism are not two different things. Buddhism is the outcome of the yogic experience that Buddha had. Prior to enlightenment and moving past his own boundaries, Buddha practised yoga, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. It was his disciples who gave the name 'Buddhism' to the process that Buddha had perfected during the course of his yoga sadhana.

If we start calling Satyananda Yoga 'Satyanandaism', then maybe after a thousand years people might say that Satyanandaism and yoga are two different things, because Swami Satyananda talks about this and yoga talks about that. If so, we would have forgotten how his experiences eventuated and which processes he followed. We should follow only the theory and experience of the original creator. Therefore, yoga does not conform to any Buddhist saying, but Buddhist sayings conform to yogic principles.

What you have claimed as a Buddhist saying – 'holy men don't dream' – is not a Buddhist saying at all. It may have

been written in a book by a Buddhist monk, but it is a yogic principle and it is true. Holy men don't dream. What then do yogis or holy people feel or see? Instead of dreams they have visions, they have revelations; they are able to foretell future events. This is the opposite of the usual way of dreaming. We do not have visions, we are not able to foretell the future and we are not able to connect with the transcendental reality.

For a normal person there are many different types of dreams. One type is related to the day's activities and the impressions created in the mind. If you have enjoyed being here, you may dream and re-create that enjoyment and see yourself in this environment. Re-creation of sensorial pleasure is one form of dreaming. There are people who experience passion in dreams. Others experience love. There are also nightmares, and wet dreams where men release semen. All these types of dreams re-create sensorial experiences, and belong to one category of dream experience.

Another type of dream creates or animates your desires and expectations. A third kind accesses the deeper realms of your conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind. A fourth type of dream is having glimpses of areas where the mind is connected to the past, present and future, and understanding those glimpses. Another form of dream is a projection of your destiny into the conscious mind.

Dreams are an expression of the mental behaviour or state that is prominent at a particular moment. Although dreams can be interpreted, there are times when they should not be interpreted because there are certain things that belong to the realm of destiny and the unknown dimension. There is a fifty-fifty balance. You have a right to know the fifty percent which is conscious, but not the fifty percent which belongs to the realm of destiny and karma. What belongs to your destiny and karma is never interpreted and cannot be identified. However, if you have the ability and wisdom to know what your destiny and karma is, then you can definitely understand those dreams.

In the United States we were involved in a dream research project at a university. A number of students took part in the

investigation. The dream experiences recorded related mainly to their sensorial experiences and their psychological states of insecurity, fear, passion, desire, aggression, and anxiety. In the tradition, the *Kenopanishad* and *Prashnopanishad* have dealt with this subject extensively. The *Prashnopanishad* deals with various questions and includes a question about dreams.

There is a subtle awareness within the inner mind, just as there is an awareness in the waking state when you are aware of the environment through your senses and mind. The interaction of the senses and the mind gives the experience of awareness in the same way as in sleep. When the mind is cut off from the sensory perceptions, a subtler awareness manifests which helps to calm the mental agitations, and the release of those agitations is seen as dreams. Dreams are like geysers that suddenly rise up when the pressure builds up. When the pressure disappears, the water again becomes peaceful and quiet.

If you want to dream, dream of what you can become, not of what you fantasize you can become. When I was a child, I used to dream that I could fly around the world like Superman. That was a fantasy. Now my dream is to be able to stand on my own two feet. So the dream has changed. Previously there was a dream to be Superman, now there is a dream to be only a man.

Hari Om Tat Sat

There are three messages to focus on as part of your future sadhana. The first is 'Hari', the second is 'Om' and the third is 'Tat Sat'. *Hari* represents life and its fullness. The richness and wholeness of life is the experience of the nourishing nature called Hari in Sanskrit. *Om* represents the transcendental nature. If our aspiration in life is to experience Hari and Om, the fullness of life and the transcendental nature, then That, *Tat*, becomes the truth, *Sat*. This is the meaning of Hari Om Tat Sat.

These words contain the emphasis, direction and aspiration of yoga. We can only experience the fullness of life when we realize ourselves. During this seminar we have discussed how to realize the inner self. We need to work to improve the quality of our lives, our mind and character. These are the first steps on the ladder of spiritual life.

The way to improve the mind is to recognize and develop awareness of its various expressions, qualities and weaknesses. To develop a balanced character, it is important to connect with the positive and virtuous. In order to experience life, we should be aware of our actions and reactions. These are the dimensions we can improve through yoga before we move on to higher experiences.

The process of sadhana is like digging a channel for water to flow through. Once the channel is dug, water can flow through it easily, satisfying everyone and nourishing life. So connecting with positive, virtuous, transformative and creative

qualities is the aim of yoga. The fulfilment of this aim is the realization that we are products of divine grace. When that awareness dawns, the heart opens. Opening of the heart towards divine grace is the realization of Om. So live yoga and experience the transcendence that is expressed in the two words 'Hari' and 'Om'.

Glossary

- Abhyasa** – constant and steady practice of sadhana without interruption
- Adhara** – support
- Adharma** – disharmony, unrighteousness
- Adwaita Vedanta** – non-dualistic philosophy of Shankaracharya based on experience of Brahman as the absolute reality
- Ahamkara** – egoism; awareness of the existence of ‘I’
- Ahara** – craving food or nourishment; third basic instinct
- Ahimsa** – absence of violence from within
- Aishwarya** – supremacy, sovereignty
- Ajapa japa** – continuous, spontaneous repetition of mantra; meditation practice in which mantra is coordinated with the breath
- Ajna chakra** – psychic command centre, seat of intuition
- Akasha** – element of ether, space
- Akshara** – imperishable
- Amalam** – free from the impurity of maya
- Anahata chakra** – psychic centre corresponding to the cardiac plexus in the physical body; centre of emotion
- Ananda** – spiritual bliss, contentment
- Anandamaya kosha** – body or dimension of bliss
- Ananta** – eternal, infinite
- Annamaya kosha** – body of matter and physical experience
- Antar darshan** – inner vision
- Antar mouna** – inner silence
- Antaranga yoga** – internal stages of yoga: pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi

Anushasana – harnessing, managing and directing the forces of the subtle personality; subtle inner discipline

Aparigraha – freedom from covetousness, non-possessiveness

Arjuna – third Pandava, son of Indra and Kunti; in the *Bhagavad Gita* he received divine revelation from his guru, Lord Krishna

Artha – material need; accomplishment; one of the four purusharthas

Asakti – attachment

Asana – physical posture in which one is at ease and in harmony with oneself; third limb of Patanjali's ashtanga yoga

Asat – unreality

Ashram – place of spiritual retreat and inner growth through internal and external labour

Ashrama – four periods of life according to vedic tradition

Ashtanga yoga – the eight limbs of yoga described by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi

Asteya – honesty, not stealing

Asura – demon

Atma – pure consciousness which pervades everything; self, soul, spirit

Atmabhava – being one with all

Atmaswaroopa – seeing oneself in others

Avidya – absence of inner knowledge

Avyakta – unmanifest

Bahiranga yoga – external stages of yoga: yama, niyama, asana and pranayama

Bala – strength, power, omnipotence

Bhagavad Gita – 'divine song'; Lord Krishna's discourse on yoga delivered to Arjuna on the battlefield at the onset of the Mahabharata war

Bhakti yoga – channelling emotional energy towards a higher reality or purpose; a systematic path with nine stages which expand, strengthen and purify the emotions

Bhaya – fear; second basic instinct

Bhoga – enjoyment, pleasure

Bhokta – one who enjoys

Bhoota – manifest element or state of existence

Bija mantra – seed mantra

Bodhisattwa – one whose essence is perfect knowledge; one who does not leave the body after attaining nirvana but remains to serve mankind

Brahma – God as creator

Brahmacharya – constant awareness of higher consciousness; continence

Brahmacharya ashrama – first stage of life up to twenty-five years of age

Brahman – eternal, omnipresent principle of existence or ultimate reality; ever expanding consciousness

Buddhi – higher intelligence, recognition, discrimination; intuitive aspect of mind

Chakra – psychic centre in the subtle body

Chetana – consciousness; unmanifest aspect of consciousness and energy

Chidakasha – inner space visualized in meditation behind the closed eyes; mind conceived as all pervading space

Chitta – individual consciousness, including the subconscious and unconscious layers of mind; storehouse of memories or samskaras

Chitta shakti – mental force governing the subtle dimensions

Chitta vritti – state of mind; inward working of the mind; mental fluctuation or modification

Darshan – inner vision

Deva – illumined being

Dharana – concentration or complete attention; sixth limb of Patanjali's ashtanga yoga

Dharma – duty, righteousness; one of the four purusharthas or goals to be fulfilled in life

Dhyana – meditation; seventh limb of Patanjali's ashtanga yoga

Diksha – initiation; birth of a new vision

Divya bhava – divine feeling

Drashta – seer, witness, uninvolved observer

Dukha – unhappiness, suffering

Dwaita vada – doctrine of dual existence

Dwesha – repulsion, aversion, dislike

Ekagrata – one-pointedness of mind

Grihastha – householder

Grihastha ashrama – second stage of life from twenty-five to fifty years of age, household or married life

Guna – quality; three characteristics of creation: sattwa, raja and tamas

Guru – one who dispels the darkness of ignorance; teacher, preceptor

Gurukul – educational system of ancient India, where children lived in the ashram and were taught a comprehensive syllabus for life by the guru

Hari – the transcendental force

Hatha yoga – system of yoga for attaining physical and mental purity and balancing the pranas in the body

Hiranyagarbha – golden womb

Ichha – desire

Ichha shakti – creative force or that desire which is the first manifestation of the greater mind

Ida nadi – channel of lunar energy governing the left side of the body and the right side of the brain; passive force

Indriya – sensory organ

Ishta devata – personal deity

Jagrat – waking state related to the conscious mind

Jignasu – spiritual seeker; preliminary stage of sannyasa

Jivatma – individual soul

Jnana – higher knowledge, cognition or wisdom

Jnana shakti – force of absolute knowledge

Jnana yoga – yoga of experiential wisdom attained through self-enquiry and analysis of the true nature of the self

Jnanendriyas – five organs of perception: ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose

Kali – goddess of destruction; primal manifestation of Shakti who destroys time, space and object

Kama – need for emotional fulfilment

Karma – action and result

Karma sannyasa – renunciation combined with duty

Karma yoga – action performed with meditative awareness; yogic path of selfless service; gaining immunity from karma by dedicating one's actions to God

Karmendriyas – five physical organs of action: vocal cords, hands, feet, genital organ and anus

Karuna – unconditional compassion

Klesha – affliction

Kriya yoga – practices of kundalini yoga designed to speed up human evolution

Krodha – anger, aggression

Kshetra – dimension

Kundalini yoga – path of yoga which awakens the dormant spiritual force

Lila – play; activity of prakriti and its three gunas

Loka – plane of existence

Mahabharata – ancient Indian epic, involving the history and consequences of the great battle between the Kaurava and Pandava princes

Mahaprana – prana in its cosmic, unmanifest aspect

Maithuna – physical union; fusion of male and female energies

Manas – finite, rational mind, concerned with senses, thought and counter-thought

Manipura chakra – psychic centre situated behind the navel in the spinal column, corresponding to the solar plexus and associated with vitality and energy

Manomaya kosha – sheath or body of mental experience

Mantra – subtle sound vibration; process of tantra for liberating energy from the limitations of mundane awareness and expanding consciousness

Maya – cause of the phenomenal world; illusion

Moha – delusion

Moksha – liberation from the wheel of birth and death

Mooladhara chakra – psychic centre connected to the coccygeal plexus; seat of kundalini

Moola prakriti – transcendental basis of physical nature

Mrityu – death

Mukti – liberation

Nada – subtle sound vibration

Nadi – channel of energy, psychic current

Nidra – deep sleep; unconscious state

Nishkama – selfless, desireless

Niyama – second limb of Patanjali’s ashtanga yoga; five rules of conduct pertaining to individual discipline

Om – sound representing the transcendental nature

Pancha mahabhootas – five gross elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth

Pashu bhava – instinctive personality

Patanjali – author of the *Yoga Sutras*; an ancient rishi who codified the system of raja yoga and propounded ashtanga yoga

Pingala nadi – major pranic channel of solar energy governing the right side of the body and the left side of the brain; vital force

Poorna – whole, complete, fulfilled

Prajna – higher wisdom, unconscious mind

Prakasha – luminosity; internal or subtle illumination; essence of sattwa guna

Prakriti – manifest and unmanifest nature composed of the three gunas; vehicle of purusha

Pramana – knowledge based on direct cognition

Prana – vital energy force

Prana shakti – dynamic solar energy

Pranamaya kosha – sheath or body of pranic energy

Pranayama – systematic series of techniques using the breath to control the flow of prana in the body and expand the range of prana shakti

Prarabdha – destiny or fate

Pratyahara – process of withdrawing and freeing the mind from the domination of the senses and external objects; limb of Patanjali’s ashtanga yoga

Purusha – pure, cosmic consciousness, masculine force

Purushottam – transcendental spirit

Raga – attraction, like

Raja yoga – eightfold path of yoga classified by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*; yoga of awakening the psychic awareness and faculties through meditation

Rajas – vitality, dynamism, motivation

Rishi – seer, realized sage

Sadhana – spiritual practice or discipline performed regularly for the attainment of inner experience and self-realization

Sahasrara chakra – highest psychic centre, located at the crown of the head; abode of Shiva or superconsciousness

Sakama – motivated by selfish desire

Samadhi – balanced wisdom; culmination of meditation; final step of raja yoga

Samarpan – total offering

Samipya – proximity to one's inner self

Samkhya – one of the six systems of Indian philosophy; philosophical basis of the system of yoga

Samskara – mental impression stored in the subtle body as an archetype

Sanatana dharma – system of eternal values underlying vedic culture

Sankalpa – positive resolve, will

Sannyasa – total renunciation of the world, possessions and attachments

Sannyasa ashrama – traditionally the fourth stage of life for everyone from seventy years onwards

Santosha – contentment, satisfaction

Sanyam – balanced attitude, restraint, harmonious control

Sat – truth

Satsang – gathering in which the ideals and principles of truth are discussed; association with the wise and the good

Sattwa – harmony, equilibrium, luminosity, purity

Satyam – truth, unchanging principle

Sayujya – final union; abiding in the absolute

Seva – serving the divine in others; first stage of Swami Sivananda's ashtanga yoga

Shakti – primal energy; feminine aspect of creation and divinity; vehicle of consciousness

Shanti – inner peace

Shaucha – cleanliness of body and mind; external and internal purity

Shishya – disciple

Shiva – 'auspicious one'; destroyer of the ego and duality; symbol of cosmic consciousness

Shivam – auspiciousness

Shoonya – void; state of absolute nothingness in which no object is experienced

Shraddha – trust, faith
Shruti – divine, transcendental realization or revelation that comes through specific experiences such as visions, dreams, or events.
Siddha – perfected being
Siddhi – psychic power or ability
Smriti – memory
Spandan – cosmic vibration
Sukha – happiness
Sundaram – beautiful
Sushumna – central energy flow or nadi in the spine, which conducts the kundalini from mooladhara to sahasrara
Swabhava – one's essential nature
Swadhisthana chakra – psychic centre associated with the sacral plexus; storehouse of subconscious impressions
Swadhyaya – self-study, continuous awareness of what one is doing
Swapna – subconscious mind, state of dreaming
Swara – breathing cycle; flow of breath in the nostrils; sound or tone
Swaroop – one's own form
Swartha – self-oriented attainment
Tamas – inertia, stability, stagnation
Tanmatra – subtle essence of the five elements
Tantra – expansion of consciousness and liberation of energy and consciousness from matter; ancient universal science dealing with transcendence of the gross nature from the present level of evolution to the highest state of human attainment
Tapasya – practice of austerity, self-discipline and purification
Tat Sat – That (Brahman) exists
Tat Twam Asi – You are That
Tattwa – essential element, essence
Tejas – self-luminosity, self-effulgence
Traita – one supreme reality manifesting as three
Turiya – superconsciousness; fourth dimension of consciousness transcending the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states
Udarata – generosity
Upanishads – ancient vedic texts containing dialogues and discussions on the nature of the absolute and the path leading towards it

Vairagya – dispassion, non-attachment
Vanaprastha ashrama – third stage of life, traditionally from fifty to seventy-five years of age_
Vasana – mental disposition; seed desire
Vedas – most ancient and authoritative scriptures of sanatan dharma, revealed to sages and seers and containing knowledge of the whole universe
Vedanta – one of the six systems of vedic philosophy, which deals with the transcendental and manifest nature of consciousness; philosophy of realization of Brahman
Veera bhava – warrior personality
Vichara – reflection
Vibhooti – divine attainment
Vidya – inner knowledge, realization
Vijnana – intuitive ability of mind
Vijnanamaya kosha – higher mental sheath or body
Vikalpa – confusion
Viparyaya – false knowledge
Vipassana – pratyahara practice developed by Buddha
Virya – immutability_
Vishada – unhappiness, dejection, despair
Vishnu – preserver of the universe
Vishuddhi chakra – psychic centre located at the throat pit, connected with purification and communication
Vishwaroopa – cosmic form
Viveka – discrimination; right knowledge or understanding
Viyoga – separation
Vritti – mental fluctuation or modification arising in consciousness
Vyadhi – disease, sickness
Vyakta – manifest
Yama – second limb of Patanjali's ashtanga yoga, five self-restraints or rules of conduct pertaining to ethical perfection
Yantra – symbol of consciousness
Yoga nidra – psychic sleep; pratyahara practice inducing deep relaxation
Yoga Sutras – ancient authoritative text on raja yoga by Sage Patanjali

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Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

“Yoga aims to improve the quality of life so that we become aware of ourselves and our potentials and begin to live them. The ultimate goal of life is not enlightenment but mind management. When inner harmony is experienced, yoga becomes a lifestyle in which we connect with others in a spirit of service and compassion.”

The fifth volume of *Yoga Sadhana Panorama* presents discourses and satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati in 2004 and 2005 in India, Australia, Mallorca, Colombia and Greece. Topics include evolution of consciousness, transformative yoga, Samkhya and Vedanta, and a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*.

These teachings are a source of inspiration, practical wisdom and guidance for all yogic aspirants seeking to develop an understanding of yoga as a practical system to apply in their lives.



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